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FEATURE STORY

A DOUBLE MYSTERY

BY

DR. HARRY ENTON

"THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE" WILL BE OUR NEXT FEATURE STORY. READ IT!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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A DOUBLE MYSTERY

AN EXCITING DETECTIVE STORY

By DR. HARRY ENTON

CHAPTER ONE

THE HEADQUARTERS MAN

"GOOD-MORNING, Gray," said the chief of the New York detective force. A tall, strongly built man of thirty-five, with a keen, intelligent face and sharp eyes had walked into his office about half-past nine on a bright spring morning. "I'm especially glad that you arrived early this morning," he added.

"Why?" asked Marshall Gray.

"For the past fifteen minutes I've had repeated calls for help from a captain of police who is terribly worked up over a case in his precinct, and has kept the telephone busy."

"What's the trouble?" asked Gray.

"I don't know, but it is important enough and mysterious enough to work this particular captain up to fever heat. He'll doubtless be like a hen on a hot griddle until he gets assistance. I suppose you know of the Chelsea Bank?"

"I know it well," responded Gray.

Here the telephone rang, and the chief picked up the receiver, saying with a smile:

"I suppose this is our excited friend again."

Then he put the receiver to his ear, and listened intently, while an expression of interest crossed his face. Finally he put his lips to the transmitter and said:

"Don't worry. Gray will be with you in fifteen minutes or so and take charge of matters."

Then he hung up the receiver and turned to the detective with a kindly smile on his face, for Gray was an especial favorite, and he liked to put big cases in his way.

"Gray," he said, "you're going to tackle a big case. The Chelsea Bank has been robbed, and that was enough to

make an important case, but the police captain reports that the watchman has been murdered as well."

"That certainly is 'some' case," admitted Gray.

"It demands immediate attention. Never mind the 'round-up,' but get up to the bank as speedily as possible and take charge of the affair."

"Thanks," gratefully said Gray, and with a parting salute he left the office and left the building.

He made quick time to the Chelsea Bank and was saluted by a uniformed officer who stood at the front door.

"Go right through to the rear, Mr. Gray," said the policeman, stepping aside to let the detective pass. "You'll find the captain waiting there for you."

Walking through the deserted counting-room, the headquarters man made his way to the vaults. He was warmly greeted by the captain of the precinct, who was standing there with his wardman and the cashier of the bank, looking down on the still form of a man who lay a few feet from the open door of a great vault, his head forming the center of a pool of dried blood.

"I'm very glad to see you, Gray," warmly said the captain, shaking hands with the headquarters man, " for we have a very queer case here, and I'll not begrudge you any glory you may get out of it. Here are the brief facts as I know them:

"This concern is comected with the Amsterdam Protective Company, and the watchman was required to ring up 'all right' every hour on the machine. The signals came in on schedule all night long, and until six o'clock this morning, but at seven o'clock it stopped.

"The burglary concern waited ten minutes, which is their usual time limit in such cases, and then sent two of their men around to investigate.

"They found the outside gates closed, the doors also, and pounded on them for a little while without result, except that the noise they made brought up the officer on the beat. When they told him about the signal failing to come in at seven, he led them around to the little door at the side, which is made possible on account of the bank standing on a corner. Here they pounded on the panels with fists and clubs in hope of arousing the watchman, who might have fallen asleep, but after a time the officer said he knew the cashier and knew where he lived, and that he would telephone him to come down at once.

"As a provision made against possible emergencies, the cashier was furnished with duplicate keys of all kinds for the bank, and when he arrived here, which was at the very moment when I got here, there was no difficulty in entering the bank.

"The watchman lay dead on the floor, just as you see him, and when you make an examination you will find that his head was crushed by a blow from some heavy instrument, probably a loaded club or an iron bar.

"The vault door was open as you see it now, and Mr. Upton, the cashier, who has investigated the interior, says that no less than a quarter of a million dollars has been taken out, mostly in bills and gold. The peculiar feature of the robbery is that the vault was not blown open."

"You mean that it was simply unlocked?" demanded Gray.

"Just that. You can see at a glance that the lock has not been injured."

"That's plain enough. Something else is also very plain," said Gray, "and that is that the man who plundered the vault was known to the watchman, for it is quite evident that the latter either admitted him by means of that little side door, or at all events walked with him to the vault, after the thief admitted himself. Then the watchman was felled and the robbery followed. There is the whole story."

As Marshall Gray ceased speaking the much disturbed captain breathed a sigh of relief, as though well pleased to have the burden shifted to much abler shoulders than his own.

Gray turned to the cashier.

Upton was a man of middle age, with a serious and open countenance that expressed honesty in every lineament. The detective was accustomed to reading men, and he did not doubt this one.

"Mr. Upton," he said, "who is the president of this bank?"

"Archibald Strain, who succeeded his late father of the same name."

"Have you communicated this news to him?"

"I naturally tried to do so, but central said there was something wrong with the telephone, so I called a messenger and sent word to his house of this terrible occurrence."

"Where does he live?"

"In Harlem."

"Then it certainly will be some time before he can reach here. Now tell me how many persons were in possession of the combination to the vault?"

"The president, the vice-president and myself."

"Who is the vice-president?"

"Ormsby Ames."

"Where does he live?"

"He has been in Europe for three years past."

"Then," slowly said Gray, "that fact narrows it down to two persons—the president and you."

Upton flushed and then grew deadly pale as the significance of this remark dawned on him.

"As for myself," he said, with a little shake in his voice that showed it was not quite under control, "I court the most rigid and searching investigation and hold myself in readiness to lend every possible aid in the matter. As for Mr. Strain, it is absurd to think of him in connection with this affair. He is noted for his many and constant charities, and has frequently been spoken of in the newspapers for his generosity in founding and supporting the Helping Hand Mission, which saves many from a life of crime. Oh, Archibald Strain is above suspicion."

"Still," urged the detective, "you are sure that the combination of the vault was known only to you three?"

"Positively."

"Well, we will go further into the matter when the president gets here. Now let us take a look at this dead man."

He bent over the still form of the watchman, made a close inspection, and came to the conclusion that the theory advanced by the captain as to the manner in which the poor fellow had met his death was correct.

Then he put his hands to the watchman's head and neck, and an expression of surprise came upon his face, after which he seized the hand and arm that lay uppermost and tried to bend the hand at the wrist and the arm at the elbow.

He then stood up and beckoned the captain to his side.

"Captain, you have attended inquests, haven't you?"

"Many of them."

"Do you recall hearing doctors speaking of the *rigor mortis?*"

"Oh, yes. That means the death chill that sets in a certain time after the demise of a person, causing rigidity."

"Exactly, and by means of the intensity of the *rigor mortis*, or stiffening, the length of time that a man or woman has been dead may be approximately fixed by a medical man."

"So I understand," assented the captain.

"Then," sensibly suggested the detective, "let us ascertain by medical testimony just how long this man has been dead, and I have an idea that the result will confirm an idea that my own examination has put in my mind. Send your wardman out at once for the nearest doctor."

"There's one a very short distance from here," rejoined the captain. "My man can go at once."

He spoke to the wardman and the latter departed on his errand. Five minutes later he was back at the bank with a physician, having fortunately met the latter just as he was leaving home.

Gray told the doctor what was wanted, and the latter at once set about making the required examination, the detective looking on with interest and also with anxiety,

for on the result depended the value of a theory he had formed in respect to the matter.

At the conclusion of the examination, which was thorough and painstaking down to the most minute detail, the physicians straightened up and delivered his conclusions.

"The appearance and certain elements of the *rigor mortis* differs somewhat in different cases," he said, "but in the course of thirty years' experience I have made many examinations of persons recently deceased, and in this particular case my judgment and experience enable me to say that this man has been dead from eight to ten hours. I am more inclined to say the latter time than the former as the true one."

Gray glanced at the captain, and the latter, divining the idea in the mind of the detective, smiled significantly.

The detective turned to the cashier and instructed him to pay the doctor and charge the cost to the bank. When this was done the physician departed. Then Gray turned to the others and spoke.

"I was sure that this man had been dead for many hours, although, of course, it was not possible for me to say just how many, and the doctor's examination confirms my suspicion, which goes to prove that the robbery and murder was committed by somebody familiar in every way with the bank. The murderer not only gave himself plenty of time to select his plunder, and also to put it in portable shape, but he stayed here all night and rang up the hourly communications on the clock with the Amsterdam people right up to six o'clock this morning. Then he quietly walked out of the side door with his quarter of a million. To my mind there is no way of discarding the idea that this job is the work of somebody who had a very thorough knowledge of the bank."

Then he spoke directly to the cashier, whose face wore an expression of great anxiety, and who was evidently much upset.

"There, Mr. Upton," he said, indicating a massive pair of steel doors not more than ten feet away from where the cashier stood, "is another vault if I am not mistaken."

"It is another vault," admitted the cashier.

"So I thought," remarked the detective, "a twin vault to this one, and just as seductive to the eye of the ordinary cracksman as the one which has been plundered. Yet it is untouched by the man who took a quarter of a million from the other vault and then stayed in the bank from last night until six o'clock this morning. It was not due to the need of haste that he did not rifle that one also, I am sure. What is in it?"

"A few bags of small change, in silver, and a lot of books and documents that relate to the bank's affairs."

"Exactly," rejoined the detective, while the police captain gazed admiringly at him, "but nothing to tempt a man who had a perfect knowledge of what was in the vault, although he stayed here all night and had plenty of time to open it if he had wanted to. It completely confirms the theory I have formed, and that is that this robbery and murder——"

At that moment the shrill tinkle of a telephone rang outside the vault and broke in upon the announcement of the detective's theory, and at the same time the clerks of the institution began to enter the front doors. Upton turned to answer the telephone, but the captain stepped forward and interposed his bulk between the cashier and the instrument. The sad-eyed cashier stepped aside with twitching lips.

"I'll attend to it," said the police captain, and took down the receiver from the hook. Then he placed the receiver to his ear.

"Hello! Hello! Yes, this is the Chelsea Bank. Yes, this is one of the clerks who is talking. What? Say that again, please. Found where? In his library? Why, this is astonishing. Who is this on the wire? Oh, is that you, chief? Yes, he is right here; do you want to speak to him? Certainly; please hold the wire."

And then the captain, with a very peculiar expression on his face, turned to the waiting detective and held out the receiver to him.

"The chief wants to speak to you."

"This is Gray, chief."

"Oh, I'm glad I caught you there, for I have a further assignment for you to attend to just as soon as you get through with your investigation at the Chelsea Bank. Archibald Strain, the president of the bank, has been found dead in his library."

"Under suspicious circumstances?"

"I should say so!"

"Well! Well!"

"It struck me as remarkable, and as there may be some connection between the ends of the two mysteries, I want you to take both cases in hand and see what you can do with them. When you have learned all that you can at the bank you had best get right up to Harlem and take charge of matters at the Strain establishment. When you have got all the information possible about the two cases come to me with your reports and we'll take them over. Good-by."

"Good-by," responded Gray, and hung up the receiver with a brain that was fairly buzzing. As he turned away he met the full gaze of the police captain, and saw that the latter was looking at him with what might be described as a smile of mildly malicious amusement.

"Gray," said the captain, "I know you well, and I have been able to follow your mental processes since you started this investigation. After hearing the message from the chief, I sympathize with you from my very soul. You're one of the best men we've got, and that is well known. But it is also well known that you are an impressionist, and it was easy enough to deduce your impression in this case. The bank had been plundered by somebody who knew the combination of the vault lock, and that was known but to three men, the president, the vice-president and the cashier. The cashier you dismissed from consideration because he impressed you as being honest. In that I agree with you. The vice-president was in Europe, and that left only the president, whose telephone was conveniently out of order when his house in Harlem was called on the wire. It is well known that bankers who have been driven to the wall by unfortunate speculation have plundered their institutions without compunction, and you had fixed on Archibald Strain as the man who was guilty of this robbery and murder."

"You are perfectly right," admitted the detective. "I felt sure that he was the guilty man, and also that he was now on his way to Europe. But now comes the information that he has been murdered, and all my theories are knocked sky high. Well, I'll finish here and then get up as quickly as possible to Harlem."

"And," suggested the captain, "as there seems to be nothing but the bare evidence of crime to go on, I'll keep the cashier under surveillance."

"That can do no harm," assented Gray, and then asked several questions of the cashier, made entries in his notebook, left the captain in charge of the bank end of the case and started off for the subway.

Half an hour later he stood at the door of the Strain mansion and pressed the button of the electric bell.

He was admitted by a middle-aged butler who glanced at the shield that the detective exhibited and waved an indicating hand to the rear of the hall.

"In there, where the policeman is standing at the door," he said, and the detective noted that a uniformed policeman was standing outside a closed door at the end of the hallway. Gray strode along the corridor and recognized the policeman on duty."

"Hello, Maguire!"

"Good-morning, Mr. Gray. Are you on this case?"

"Yes."

The policeman glanced cautiously up and down the hallway, and then lowered his voice to a whisper:

"Come close, Mr. Gray."

The detective stepped up very close to him, and then Maguire whispered this intelligence softly in his ear:

"There's some queer business going on here, Mr. Gray,

and I made up my mind to tell it to whatever headquarters man was assigned to the case. In the first place, when I was put here by the captain, the son of the murdered man walked past several times, with his handkerchief to his eyes. I thought he was feeling bad for the way his old man had been dealt with. But I had not been here very long when a note was brought to the front door, taken in by one of the servants, and handed over to young Mr. Strain. He opens it, says something that sounded like a furious curse, and then rushes upstairs in great excitement to the next floor. What followed I could hear as plain as could be. He knocks on a door and calls out 'Mother! Mother!' in a way that showed he was all worked up. When the door was unlocked, as I could hear well enough, he says in the same excited way: 'Listen to this.'

"I think he must have waited a moment for the purpose of getting the exact reading of the note that the servant had handed him, and after a wait of half a minute or so I heard him say in that same flurried way:

"'Accident. Injured. Can't go——'

"That's as far as he got. A woman's voice said 'Hush!' in a sharp tone, and then the door was closed and I didn't hear any more. But I'm telling you that that note made all the difference in the world to young Strain's grief, for he forgot to use his handkerchief and dab at his eyes when he came down into the hallway again, and if ever a man showed that he was put out terribly about something, he certainly did."

"Thanks, Maguire," said Gray. "You're the right man for this case, that's sure."

"I shall do my utmost."

"I knew you would."

Maguire flushed with pleasure at this praise.

"Now," added Gray, "can you tell me who notified the station?"

"Yes; it was the son."

"By telephone?"

"No, he came to the station himself."

"Were you there when he came in?"

"Yes."

"Did you observe him closely?"

"Yes."

"What was his manner?"

"Excited and crying. All the time he was talking to the captain he kept his handkerchief dabbing away at his eyes and sobbing something awful so that he had the captain quite worked up."

"And since the arrival of that note, or telegram, or whatever it was, there are no more tears, but curses and an appearance of vexation instead, eh?"

"That's right, Mr. Gray."

"Very well, Maguire. Continue to keep your eyes and ears open."

Then, after again commending the policeman for his sharpness and shrewdness, in such terms as to make Maguire fairly crimson with gratification, the detective opened the door and passed into the library.

The morning sunlight was streaming through unshaded windows into the spacious apartment, and the detective closed the door and stood quietly surveying the scene about him.

While he stood there looking around, all that the uniformed man had told him was recalled as closely as the detective could remember the exact verbiage. As he turned the information over in his mind he could not repress the conviction that what Maguire had seen and heard pointed to something very unsual and startling in connection with the crime.

Then Gray again swept the entire room with his eyes, and as he did so he drew forth his notebook and pencil and began to jot down such matters as might be of service to him while pursuing his investigation.

Slowly and carefully, convinced that he was at the threshold of a most important matter, he made the entries in his notebook and then fixed his gaze upon the still form of the bank president.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DETECTIVE SUSPECTS A "PLANT"

He saw a man of apparently middle age, dark-skinned and dark-haired, and dressed in a handsome suit of clothing, sitting in a large armchair not far from an open window. Half a dozen feet away was a small safe of obsolete make, one of the kind that locked and unlocked with a key. It was the kind which some families still make use of, principally for rare coins, curios and kindred matters. As a matter of fact, the detective, from where he stood, could see a large number of rare coins lying on the carpet, mixed up with a few pieces of modern gold money and some unique specimens of delicate ivory workmanship.

For a couple of minutes he surveyed the scene before him and then went to the open window. On the sill, which had evidently been painted within a short time, he could make out a number of scratches such as would be left by the bootheels of a person making an exit from the room.

Then he walked over to the dead man and inspected him closely.

That he had been killed without a struggle was shown by the fact that one leg was thrown over the other in such a way as to cause the leg of the trousers to rise, exposing the socks and underwear. Gray bent down and closely inspected the latter, and then shook his head in a surprised manner.

"That's mighty queer!" he exclaimed.

As he glanced up from the inspection he became aware that on the wall behind the dead man there was a portrait of him. Gray looked long and earnestly at the picture, and then as steadfastly regarded the victim.

"An excellent likeness," was his comment, "and when he sat for it he had the very same suit of clothes on."

As he made the remark he was looking at the smooth-shaven face of the dead man, and from there his eyes traveled to the collar and lapels of the coat.

Something that caught his eyes made him bend over the still form and make a long and close inspection.

"Another mighty queer thing!" he said.

Then he walked over to the wall immediately behind the dead man and again inspected the well executed portrait that hung there, and which it was quite easy to determine had been recently painted and framed.

"What next?" muttered the detective. Then he endeavored by personal examination to conclusively establish the cause of death.

A fatal blow had been delivered with some convex instrument. On the floor lay a hemispherical glass paperweight which he picked up and held in his hand, estimating it to weigh not less than two pounds. Then he saw finger marks on the man's throat, but at once decided that the blow with the paper-weight had done the deed, and that the assassin had gripped the victim's throat afterward to prevent the possibility of an outcry.

Close by where the paper-weight had lain there was a handkerchief. Gray picked it up and saw that it was small, square, of fine linen, edged with a border of lace. He raised it to his nostrils and inhaled a perfume that was perfectly new to him, and so very faint that he could scarcely get the exquisite scent. He turned the handkerchief around so as to sniff at the other side, and got another kind of perfume from that.

Much puzzled, he repeated the operation and found that on the one side he obtained the faint and unknown perfume, while on the other side he got a very decided odor of one of the popular perfumes of the day.

Then an idea dawned in his mind; he dropped the handkerchief to the floor and raised his hand to his nose. At once he got the faint but unknown odor from his fingers. Then he picked up the paper-weight and assured himself that it carried the same exquisite perfume.

He bent down and ran his hand over the hair of the dead man, raised his hand to his nose, and got a strong whiff of the same fragrant scent.

Satisfied that he had traced the origin of the scent, Gray put the handkerchief and paper-weight aside, and then walked over to the open safe and closely inspected the litter that lay before it on the carpet. Among the coins and other articles heaped up on the floor lay a short, powerful "jimmy" of the type used by professional cracksmen, and the exposed bolt of the lock plainly showed marks that had evidently been made by it. Among the mass of stuff on the carpet, however, there was a small, shining object, nearly concealed by some ancient and valuable coins. An odd smile came to the detective's face as he bent and picked it up.

"More queer business," he muttered. "At first glance it looked like a plain and easily read story, but now it looks like a 'plant.'"

Marshall Gray held in his hand a small, steel key, and while his practised eye assured him that it was made for the lock of the safe in front of him, he did the obviously natural thing and tried it in the lock.

It fitted perfectly.

Then he closely inspected the lock.

His inspection showed that the bolt of the lock was marked by several strong blows from some sharp and powerful tool, but when the detective minutely examined the paint on the door close to the bolt, and also the paint where the bolt entered the strong framework of the steel, he smiled.

"What next?"

Looking around the room once more, he saw that there was a small closet opposite him. He opened the door and saw that the half-dozen shelves were mostly occupied by books that evidently formed an overflow from the handsome bookcase that stood near it, but among the books he saw something that looked very much out of place among the volumes, and that was a shaving mug with a brush in it.

He removed the mug from the shelf and looked into it carefully.

It was about a quarter full of suds and, as he shoved it in a rotary manner, he saw that there was a little water under the foam. An inspection of the upper part of the brush, where the hairs joined on to the handle, assured him that the brush had been used not many hours previously.

A little further search in the closet brought to light the razor that had formed part of the outfit, and the detective looked keenly on all sides for either paper or cloth in which the razor had been wiped.

Nowhere in the room could he find anything of the kind. Still intent on his search he walked to the window and minutely surveyed the yard below, regarding it as strange that he had not noted anything of that kind at the time that he had taken his previous peep from the window, but this was explained when his downward gaze rested on a piece of paper sticking to the rear wall of the house, perhaps three feet from the window-sill.

"It was thrown out of the window, and the breeze threw it back against the rear wall," the detective decided.

He carefully detached it from where it had stuck against the wall and carried it inside. Then he compared the hairs among the lather with those that adhered to the shaving paper, and decided that they were of the same general appearance and of the same color and length. He shook his head in a dissatisfied way and sat down.

"It will not do," he said. "The thing is too evidently a 'plant' to satisfy such an investigator as me. Here is the way the scene reads:

"Archibald Strain was sitting in that chair when the assassin stole up behind him and hit him with that paperweight, after which he caught the banker by the throat to prevent any possible outcry and also to assure the death of the victim if he showed any signs of life.

"Then the murderer used a short, powerful 'jimmy' to open the safe, and in his haste to get something of greater value than anything lying in that heap on the floor, allowed the various articles strewn there to remain while he was making a further search, not even troubling himself to pocket the ten- and twenty-dollar gold pieces or any of the rare coins that might be worth much more. In the midst of his work he was alarmed by something, or else found what he was in search of, and hastily made his exit by way of the window.

"That's the way it reads, and that's the way, probably, it was intended to be read by the police, but the picture is spoiled in more ways than one. The key of the safe is among the other things on the carpet, and it is evident that the fellow meant at first to open the safe with it, and later on conceived the idea of making it appear to have been forced. But, while the bolt shows marks, the paint on either side of the bolt is untouched, and that doesn't stand to reason.

"Then the dead man wears a watch and chain, both of great value, and he also has a diamond stickpin in his tie. They were worth taking by anybody who contemplated robbery! Why didn't the murderer take them?

"No, the picture will not do, but for that matter there are things in this case that are more puzzling than anything I have ever encountered in a murder case, and one of them is to understand why the murderer shaved himself while standing over his victim, and in such a manner that some hairs from his beard fell on the latter's clothing.

"Why did he do that? And, unless he happened to be a member of the household, how did he know where to find the mug and the razor? And how could there have been any need for haste if the murderer had time for a shave? The whole case as I view it is full of contradictions, and I should not be surprised if I found more of them when I continue my investigation."

Once more he made a careful survey of the room and everything in it. He made a number of entries in his notebook. Then he walked out into the hallway and found Maguire talking to a man of middle age.

"Mr. Gray," said the policeman, "this is Mr. Hawkins, the personal attendant or body servant of the banker, and the first one who discovered the body."

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Hawkins," said the detective, estimating the man with a long, searching glance "Do you recall what time that was?"

"Yes, it was shortly before nine."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, sir, there's not much to tell. I knocked at the door and waited for an answer and then knocked again, for it was about the usual time that the master left for the bank. Then I knocked again, and after waiting a minute or so I went in."

"Hold on," said Gray, "do you mean that you simply turned the knob and walked into the room?"

Hawkins nodded.

"Then the door wasn't locked?"

"No, sir."

Gray was silent for a moment, turning over this bit of information in his mind, and the policeman broke in impulsively:

"Hawkins knows something that seems to me to be of considerable importance in this case, Mr. Gray."

"What is it, Hawkins?"

"Well, sir," returned Hawkins, "I don't want to be understood as making any sort of charge against anybody, but this is what I know, and now that the master has been murdered I think I ought to speak of it. You see, sir, there is a young lady in this house who has been here for over four months, teaching German, French and Spanish to the master, his wife and the young master, Reginald Strain. About a week or so ago I was in the upper hallway, where this young woman has her room, and heard the master and her talking loudly and angrily while they both stood in her apartment. I heard her say as plain as could be: 'Oh, I'd like to kill you!' I did not stop at all, for I've been brought up to mind my own business, and so I continued along the hallway, and out of the room came the master. He saw me and walked after me. 'Hawkins,' he says, 'did you hear what that young woman shouted out at me just a moment ago?' 'Yes, sir,' says I, 'I was just passing the door when she made that remark.' 'She was very angry,' he says. 'A few days ago I brought

home a diamond ring to give to my wife on her birthday, which happens shortly, and while it was lying on my desk Miss Delgarde came in and looked at it in such a way that I knew at once that she coveted the jewel. That ring is missing, Hawkins, and I asked her if she knew anything about it. That's why she flared up at me in the way you happened to hear.' Well, Mr. Gray, that's the whole story, and now that the master has been murdered I thought I ought to speak out about it."

"Quite right, Hawkins," said the detective. "Is she still in the house?"

"Yes, sir, she is in her room, and I understand that she is packing up and getting ready to leave."

"I shall have a talk with her presently. Now, Hawkins, I understand that you were the personal attendant of Mr. Strain. Was he at home all the evening of his last night on earth?"

"He was, sir,"

"Were you in attendance?"

"I was, at his request. Usually the first man would have been on duty, but Mr. Strain requested me to remain in the hall and admit a visitor."

"Oh, he expected a visitor? Did the visitor come?"

"Yes, sir, he came about nine o'clock. I asked him for his card, or to give me his name, but he told me to say to the master that it was the gentleman he expected to call. When I made the announcement to Mr. Strain he told me to show the gentleman in."

"Can you describe the visitor?"

"Well, I can state that he was tall and dark and wore a short, black beard."

"And after that what happened?"

"Nothing; that is, as far as anything in my knowledge connected with this case goes, for in a few minutes the master came out of the library and sent me on an errand downtown that took me about an hour. When I returned he met me in the hallway and told me that he had no further need of me that evening and that I could either go out, or go to bed, as I pleased. I was tired and went to bed and never saw Mr. Strain alive again."

"Please show me up to the room occupied by this young lady teacher of foreign languages."

Hawkins bowed assent and led the way up the stairs to the top floor. There he silently pointed out the closed door of a room and walked discreetly away.

The detective knocked gently on the panel.

While waiting for it to be opened he reviewed the communication Hawkins had made in relation to the teacher.

The explanation that Archibald Strain had seen fit to make to Hawkins made the detective think that the teacher had merely given way to a burst of passion when she uttered the threatening words. But in view of the fact that the banker had been mysteriously murdered, the threat assumed grave proportions in the eye of the man who was conducting a criminal investigation.

Gray's gentle knock on the panel had been heard, for there was a light step within the room and then the door was opened by a young woman of perhaps twenty-five years, whose unusual personal charms so impressed the man from headquarters that for a moment he lost his customary self-possession.

She was slightly above the middle stature, with a beautifully rounded figure which the simple but well-cut dress she wore set off most alluringly.

Her eyes were deep blue, and she possessed that rare milk-and-blood complexion more commonly found in England than elsewhere on earth. The small, red, full-lipped mouth made a perfect Cupid's bow.

In short, the teacher of foreign languages was fascinating.

It was evident that she had thought one of the servants was at the door, for she opened her lips to speak and then closed them promptly when she saw that a stranger stood there. Her lovely eyes widened with surprise as she looked wonderingly at the headquarters man. The officer did not wish to appear rude, but found himself either unable or else unwilling to remove his gaze from the exquisite face that confronted him.

On the part of the young woman there was ample evidence that she approved the strong, fine face before her, and also mentally commended the powerful and graceful outlines of the man. There was no scintilla of coquetry in her glance.

Just as a faint blush appeared in her cheeks, under the admiring regard of the detective, she broke the silence that had seized upon them both.

"Well, sir?" she said.

Marshall Gray thought that he had never heard human tones so full of music, and he was forced to pull himself together in order to speak out, so greatly did this girl's charms affect him.

"You are Miss Delgarde?"

"I am."

"I would like to have a few minutes' conversation with you."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Gray."

"What do you want to talk about, Mr. Gray?"

There was a puzzled expression on her face which told Gray that she had not the slightest suspicion of his business. He felt that he was quite unreasonably and very powerfully affected by the girl's charms, indifferent as he had always been in such matters. With the conviction that his feelings might divert him from maintaining the straight line of his duty, he gave himself a vigorous shake and in that way tried to get rid of the unusual spell that the lovely creature had cast over him. Then he came straight to the point. He was still standing in the doorway of the room, and there was nobody else in the hallway. He drew from his pocket the handkerchief he had picked up on the floor of the library and held it out toward the young girl.

"Is that your handkerchief?"

One glance sufficed for her.

"Yes, it is mine."

"And is this also your property?"

As he asked the question he held out the heavy paperweight, at the same time fixing his glance on her face on the lookout for any telltale sign, but the girl remained perfectly calm, exhibiting only an exceedingly natural degree of surprise.

"Yes, that is also mine," she quietly responded. "Where did you happen to get them from, Mr. Gray?"

With his eyes still fixed on her face Marshall Gray delivered his startling answer:

"I picked them both up on the floor of the library, a few feet from the dead man, who is sitting there in a chair. He was killed by a blow on the head that was undoubtedly made by this heavy paper-weight!"

Then, at that terrible response, freightened with a frightful suggestion in view of her admission of ownership of both handkerchief and paper-weight, she gasped for breath. The rich color forsook her creamy face and left her deadly pale.

She caught at the jamb of the door for support, and Gray could see that her knees were trembling under her.

To his surprise, for his service in police work had hardened him, he found that he was pitying her. Yes, there was no mistake about it. Many a time had he been forced to arrest women as beautiful as this one, and never before had he experienced the strange sensations that now surged up in his breast.

"Confound this odd feeling," he mentally said, and again gave himself a canine-like shake to rid himself of the unusual emotion. Then he fixed his eyes on the girl with all the sterness he could summon up.

"Moreover, Miss Delgarde," he said, "a short time ago you were heard to threaten the life of Archibald Strain."

Then she reeled, and would have crashed straight to the floor had not the detective caught her in his arms.

She lay white and limp in his clasp, but it was evident that she had not lost consciousness, for he heard low, murmured words from her blanched lips.

"Oh," she faintly gasped, "this is terrible!"

Marshall Gray held her lightly but firmly, and she sighed.

With an effort the girl opened her eyes and then gently released herself from his supporting arms. Still white to the lips, but now collected in her manner, she faced him in a resolute way.

"Are you a detective?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And do you charge me with this murder?"

"No; but there will be an inquest, and when these exhibits are laid before the coroner, and a witness tells of the threat you made against Mr. Strain, your arrest is likely to be ordered. I confess that I feel an interest in you, inspired by your appearance, which is not that of a criminal. If you have any explanation to make in respect to the handkerchief or the paper-weight, or anything to say in regard to the threat that you made against your late employer, I am willing to listen to you. Moreover, if your explanations satisfy me, I will try to help you out of this trouble."

His words were simple enough; in fact, there was nothing in his sentences which any legal adviser might not have uttered. But there was something in his tone that made her steal an upward glance at his strong face, and then the color slowly returned to her cheeks and her eyes softened, while a gleam of irrepressible admiration crept into their depths as she regarded the detective.

"Thank you," she replied, in a rich, sweet voice, and she gave him her hand. Marshall Gray glowed with a tingling sensation at his heart as her fingers pressed his hand in a firm clasp.

"We are forgetting about matters that may have an important bearing on your case, Miss Delgarde."

"To what do you refer?"

"Is this your handkerchief?" he asked. "Yes, it is mine," she replied. "And is this also your property?" He held out the heavy paper-weight. "Yes, that is also mine," she quietly responded.

"We are forgetting about the heavy paper-weight and the handkerchief, both of which I found on the floor close to the dead man, and both of which you have admitted to be your property."

"True," she said, "but such slight matters could not put me in serious danger, could they, Mr. Gray?"

"Added trifles finally make a most imposing bulk, and it is not wise to lightly consider such matters. You say that they both belonged to you, and I say that I found them both near the dead man. That, added to the fact of your overheard threat, makes quite a chain, and it would relieve my mind if you were to explain to me how they came to be in the library."

It astonished the detective to find that he was now pleading with Hortense Delgarde instead of interrogating her in the usual police style. But it was impossible for him to address her in any other way, so powerfully had the French girl affected him.

"What you say is true," she observed, "and it would be unwise, with the shadow of suspicion hanging over me, to neglect to set everything right that I possibly can. However, in regard to the handkerchief and the paper-weight, I can only say that they are mine and that I do not know how they came to be in the library."

"When were they last in your possession?"

She reflected a moment.

"Yesterday," she responded.

"So much for them," said Gray, as though dismissing the handkerchief and the paper-weight from further consideration. "It is easy enough to understand that they may have been taken from your room. Now for a much more important matter and one which will have the greatest weight with the coroner in his inquest."

The girl gave a little shiver and once more her cheeks grew pale as she grasped the underlying meaning of Gray's remark.

"You mean that threat!" she murmured faintly.

"Yes," he responded. "I mean the threat, which, followed by the murder of the man threatened, becomes a matter that certainly requires explanation."

"Mr. Gray, it is mortifying to have to explain it," said the girl as a rich flush swept like a wave over her neck and face, "but I know that such words must be explained in circumstances like these, and I feel that I can say to you what would be more difficult to say to the coroner."

Her words gave him a delicious sense of intimacy, but he made no remark and she went on:

"This is how I came to make that foolish remark. Mr. Strain came to my room, making a pretext for the visit in regard to some business that had already been attended to, as he well knew, and while he was there he made a proposal to kiss me. I assure you, on my most sacred honor, Mr. Gray, that I had done nothing to encourage him to think that I would accede to such an advance. The unwarranted and outrageous character of the insult made me lose my mental poise. In my intense indignation I lost my temper. I shouted out the threat against him which somebody must have overheard and repeated to you."

The detective looked down admiringly at her.

"That is a very excellent explanation," he presently said.

She flashed a beseeching glance at him from her sapphire eyes that seemed to penetrate his very heart.

"Oh, and don't you believe that it is the true explanation?" she pleadingly asked.

"Yes, Miss Delgarde, I do believe you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she fervently said, her face expressing a newborn hope at his words. "I assure you, Mr. Gray, that I am a good girl, working hard to support myself in decent style, and never once in all the months that I've been an inmate of this house have I given anybody reason to think that I was a light character. I know what many persons think about French girls, but not a soul on earth can say a truthful word against my good name. Now that you have the explanation, may I look to you to help me?"

She laid her hand on his arm with a gesture that was confidential and pleading.

"Why, Miss Delgarde," he answered, "I certainly have an interest in you, and as the affair stands at the present time I think I can promise——"

At that instant there was something of a commotion in the lowest hallway that caused the detective to turn his head inquiringly toward the stairway, and an instant later the voice of the uniformed man came floating up through the corridors.

"Mr. Gray!"

"Yes, Maquire?"

"Please come down here."

The detective bowed to the young girl, who gave him a glance in which there was a mute plea that he fully understood, and then ran swiftly down the flights of stairs to the main hallway. The uniformed man met him at the foot of the last flight.

"What is it, Maquire?"

"Well, the coroner is here for one thing, and besides that there's a party who wants to speak to you. This is the man."

And Maquire turned and beckoned to a man who looked as though he belonged to the better class of servants.

"Mr. Gray," said Maquire, "this is Blifkins, the butler, and he came into the house a few minutes ago. He went out early last evening. I've had a talk with him, and he's told me something that I feel you should know without delay, and that's why I called you down. He's got a queer tale to tell you about the young woman upstairs."

Gray felt a strange tugging at his heart as he heard this declaration from the lips of the wide-awake uniformed man.

"What young woman?" he almost savagely demanded, for there was in his mind at that instant a distinct idea that he was called upon to defend her.

"Why, that young woman teacher," answered Maguire. "I tell you, Mr. Gray, it looks pretty bad for her, and no mistake."

To his own surprise Gray felt an insane desire to slap the lips opened to denounce the beautiful creature who had so wonderfully impressed him in the short time that he had passed in her company, but he pulled himself together and turned quietly to the butler.

However, it was some time before he could sufficiently command himself to ask Blifkins to retell the story that he had already told to the eager Maguire. He had to acknowledge to himself that he dreaded to hear anything that might tend to fix upon the charming French girl further suspicion of having committed the crime that had brought him to the house.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ARROW OF THE LITTLE BLIND GOD!

THOROUGHGOING sleuth that he was, and heart and soul in his profession, Gray had heard Maguire's declaration with mixed feelings.

"Well, Mr. Gray," began Blifkins, "in the first place I must tell you that as I had a night off, and an appointment to meet a friend, I went out in the neighborhood of seven o'clock. My appointment was to meet my friend. We had arranged to meet at a corner only a couple of blocks from here. On this corner there is a very large tree, and the nearest street light is not less than a hundred feet away. This makes the vicinity of the tree unusually dark. I was standing close to the trunk of the tree, waiting for my friend to come along, when a young chap walks right up to the tree.

"He passed me by, and I could see that he was a foreign-looking chap. When he took up a position about three feet away from me around the trunk of the tree, I could hear him breathing, just as though he had hurried to get there. While I was listening to him breathing after his hurry, although I couldn't see him around the trunk of the tree, along comes Miss Delgarde and walks right past me and up to the foreign-looking chap. They at once began to whisper, and so low that, although they were only a few feet away, I could not catch all that was said, but merely a sentence here and there. But what I could make out from what I did hear was that he wanted to do something or else wanted her to do something. I couldn't rightly decide which from the fragments I heard. She was standing out against him in a very determined way. Finally he must have got angry, for he raised his voice so that I could hear him distinctly for a second, and then I heard him say:

"'Hortense, it must be. I'm a desperate man.'

"Then I heard her say:

"'Oh, no, no, not to-night.'

"'Yes, to-night,' he said, and then something caused them to walk away from the tree, and the last thing I heard she was speaking, and she said:

"'It will make everybody regard me with suspicion, and it will be awful hard for me to explain.'

"And then," went on Blifkins, who evidently recognized the importance of his communication and relished the recital very much, "they passed out of hearing, and I could only catch the murmur of their voices as they argued the matter that they were disputing about, but I could not catch another word of what they were saying. However, I could see them when they came within the halo of the street lamps I spoke about, and they were still evidently talking the same matter over and getting very excited. Once they stopped for a moment, and it was perfectly plain that the man was trying to get her to consent to something and that she was trying to stand out against him. "Well, sir, that's the whole of it. Of course, I didn't think much of it at the time, but when I came in and found out that the master had been murdered, and then recalled what Hawkins told me yesterday about the loss of the diamond ring, why, then it all came back to me very sharply. I put two and two together, as the saying is, and that the police should have all the knowledge about that young French woman that they could get."

"Quite right, quite right," absently murmured Gray, who had felt a cold sensation around his heart as he listened to the butler's story. "It is an important matter, and you have done quite right in not withholding such information from the police. Anything else, Blifkins?"

"Nothing else, sir."

"I suppose you will testify to the conversation you overheard when the coroner calls you?"

"Certainly, sir. I have already told the coroner that I have testimony of great value to him."

Without another word Marshall Gray turned away and once more ascended the stairway to the top floor. The door of the teacher's room was open, and the detective did not hesitate about walking directly into the apartment.

She was on her knees before a half-filled trunk.

The French girl heard his light footstep as she bent over the trunk she was carefully packing, and looked around with what was plainly an expectant expression on her face.

"Pardon me for entering your room in such an assured manner," almost stammered the usually self-possessed detective, "but, as a matter of fact, I have some questions to ask you, and they are so important that they will not admit of the delay needed in ordinary politeness."

She at once arose and faced him, agitated and somewhat

apprehensive, it was easy to see, but with her queenly head upheld.

"What are your questions?" she asked.

"Miss Delgarde, is it true that you left this house at an early hour during last evening?"

There was not the most momentary hesitation in the answer:

"Yes, I did."

"For what purpose?"

"To meet somebody."

"An appointment?"

"Yes, you might call it that."

"Did you meet a man or a woman?"

Marshall Gray awaited the answer with ill-concealed agitation, for above all he wanted to be able to rely upon the truthfulness of this charming French girl who had affected him so strangely. A lie at this time would go far toward destroying the faith that he wished to repose in her.

This time she did hesitate for the merest fraction of time, and Gray felt an uneasy sensation at his heart, which vanished when she frankly stated:

"I went out to meet a man."

"Who was that man?"

"That I will not tell you."

"Do you mean that you dare not?"

"Mr. Gray!"

For one brief instant the sapphire eyes flashed and a most vivid crimson came into the cheeks, and she made a picture of indignation that almost made Gray gasp for breath.

The detective thought he had never looked upon a more fascinating picture than this bewildering pretty French girl presented when her indignation was aroused. But he squared his shoulders and reluctantly took up the task that had once more brought him to the top floor of this house of mystery.

"Miss Delgarde," he said, "your meeting with this man was witnessed, and part of the conversation you had with him was overheard. You will have to explain to the coroner, who is now conducting an investigation downstairs, and who will shortly summon and question you, what was meant by you and this man when you said certain things."

Then, while she listened with dilated eyes, he repeated to her, almost word for word, what the butler had told him he had heard in the shadow of the big tree. She grew deadly pale as she listened and the awful significance of the words, when taken into connection with the murder, dawned on her. She shivered as though with cold, and her glance fell.

"Miss Delgarde," persisted the detective, "what did that man say to you last night that he wanted you to do, and which you were unwilling to do, and which you said would cause everybody to regard you with suspicion? If you will explain that matter satisfactorily I will save you from being called and questioned by the coroner."

A moment she stood silently before him, her heart heaving with the intense emotions that shook her, and then she faintly whispered:

"I cannot."

"Do you clearly comprehend that the stories the others will tell to the coroner will undoubtedly cause him to order your arrest?"

She silently nodded her head.

"And yet you will not speak?"

"I cannot," she again faintly whispered, and with something that sounded like a sigh the headquarters man turned away and left her.

At the top of the stairs the detective came to a pause and stood there for a moment thinking deeply. Was it possible that this French girl was implicated in the murder? Did her refusal to reveal the name of the man whom she had met the night before, and her refusal to give any explanation of the mysterious conversation mean that she was trying to screen somebody? Could it be possible that the man she had met in the shadow of the big tree was her lover? Had he planned the robbery, and, if necessary, the murder of the banker, and had he been pleading with the teacher to assist him in the commission of the crime?

As these thoughts ran through his brain he felt almost as a man might feel when seasick.

What was more common in the annals of crime than for a supposedly innocent young girl employed in a home of wealth, to let her criminal lover know the whereabouts of valuables, to acquaint him with the plan of the house, to admit him to the premises, when it could be done without creating suspicion, and then to share with him in the plunder? Could not this young girl have admitted her lover after Hawkins had been sent on an errand, and secreted him until an opportunity offered for him to enter the library where the banker was sitting in fancied security, and was it not easily plausible that she had hidden him in her room until the time came to creep forth on his mission of both robbery and death? Moreover, was it not extremely probable that he had taken from her room that heavy paper-weight that had dealt the deathblow to Archibald Strain? What was there to make him doubt the fairness of these assumptions? What was there? Why, there was nothing in the world except a pair of sapphire eyes, a complexion of milk and blood, the contour of an exquisitely moulded form, the recollection of the full, rounded figure that pressed against him as she lay in his arms, and the thrilling music of a pleading voice that seemed to speak direct to his heart in tones that made him vibrate as never before in all his life.

"Confound it!" growled the headquarters man, "am I getting foolish over that girl? Nonsense! I'll drive her out of my mind and keep digging away at this mystery until I get to the bottom of it."

Once more he gave himself that dog-like shake, as though to shed his impressions by the movement, and then descended the stairs. He found Hawkins, and at once spoke to him.

"Hawkins, did you have charge of Mr. Strain's clothing?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to show me his clothing and underclothing."

"Certainly, sir."

Without delay Hawkins led the way to a handsome furnished room on the first floor and then opened the door of a large closet where several suits of clothing were suspended from hangers. Marshall Gray looked them over. Then he turned to Hawkins.

"Do you know what suits Mr. Strain had?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then see if they are all here," requested the detective.

Hawkins looked surprised, but complied with the request.

After a careful inspection of the contents of the big closet he turned a surprised and puzzled face toward the sleuth.

"What's wrong?" asked Gray, but a peculiar smile was lurking around the edges of his lips as he spoke.

"Why," returned Hawkins, "they're not all here."

"When did you look at them last?"

"Yesterday morning, and then there was a plain, dark suit that required some little attention, and I gave it a fine brushing and hung it up again."

"And that is the suit that is missing now?"

"It is, sir."

"Very well. Now be good enough to show me the underclothing."

Hawkins threw open a drawer in a chiffonier and revealed an orderly array of underclothing. Gray inspected it closely.

"That is the kind of underclothing that Mr. Strain always wore?" he asked.

"Always, sir."

"Very good. Now for another matter. As you were his personal attendant, I suppose you always shaved him?"

"Never but once, sir, and then he said that I had a heavy hand, and I never had the honor of shaving him again."

"Oh, then he shaved himself?"

"No, sir, he went to a barber."

"I see. The same barber all the time?"

"Yes, sir, to a shop right around the nearest corner. It has a sign up that says it is the Unique."

"I understand. When was Mr. Strain shaved last, if you know?"

"Yesterday afternoon. I happen to be sure of that knowledge because I went with him to the door of the Unique."

"Thanks, Hawkins," thoughtfully said Gray, and walked towards the door. "Well, I think that's about all for now."

"Very good, sir," said Hawkins. "The coroner is sitting now, Mr. Gray, if you would like to have a look in on the inquest."

Gray peered in through the open doorway of the library where the coroner and a jury were sitting, and his glance fell on a young man seated at one side of the room who was watching the proceedings with a scowling face.

Maguire, following the direction of the detective's glance, said in a low tone:

"That's Reginald Strain, the son."

Gray nodded, and then studied the scowling face.

It did not take the detective long to decide that he did not like Reginald Strain's face at all. However, his study of it was necessarily brief, for at that moment Hawkins was called, and word was sent out to Blifkins to be ready to follow him as a witness. Gray felt that it would be disagreeable for him to hear these two men testify against the charming girl who had so instantly and thrillingly aroused a new sensation within his breast, and he turned abruptly away as Hawkins took the stand.

He told Maguire that he probably would be back again, and then he left the premises and made his way downtown again by means of the subway, trying hard to think over matters with his usual concentration and finding it utterly impossible to do so.

He turned the bank case over in his mind, and then reverted to the one he had just left, endeavoring to find some point of evidence which would establish a connection between the two, and without knowing just when the change of thought took place, he found himself thinking of Hortense Delgarde.

"Oh, the devil!" cried Gray, so vehemently that some of the passengers in the car glanced curiously at him. "What a fool I am to let myself get 'dippy' over that girl."

With a dogged expression on his face he once more set himself to the task of going over the facts he had established in the two cases, and by a great mental effort he managed to stick to his task, although not without frequent glimpses of a pair of sapphire eyes, a milk-and-blood complexion, and an exquisitely moulded form and a voice of alluring sweetness.

Straight to the office of the chief of the department went Gray, and his superior officer listened with intent interest to the recital of all that he had gathered in the two cases.

"So far as the bank is concerned," reflectively said the chief, "I can see nobody to suspect but the cashier."

"He will be closely watched," said Gray, "but if he proves to be the guilty man I shall be ready to hand in my shield."

"Well, I've never found you wrong in that respect yet, Gray. Now, in the other case, you say that this young French woman, around whom so many suspicious circumstances cluster, doesn't look like a criminal to you, either?"

"That's my impression, chief, but——"

And there the speaker halted, too much embarrased to finish.

"Go ahead, Gray."

"Well," desperately said Gray, "the truth is, she is so bewilderingly and fascinatingly pretty, that I feel it is possible that she may have in some degree confounded my judgment.'"

The chief threw back his head and indulged in a laugh that caused the blood to surge up into the other's face.

"Why, Gray," he said, "I thought that you were proof against such things?"

Gray was too embarrassed to say anything.

"Well," said the chief, "there may be a speedy way to bring about a revulsion of feeling. Take a look at the 'mug' book, and you may find the face of your charmer there."

Marshall Gray turned away at once and began an inspection of the photographs of female criminals who had been one or more times within the clutches of the law, and it was with a sigh of relief that he finished his search without finding Hortense Delgarde's face among them.

"Not there, chief," he said, and once more the chief smiled at the tone in which the announcement was made.

"She may be a new one," he observed. "However, the coroner can scarcely fail to commit her on the testimony he hears. Then there will be plenty of time to find out all about her. Hello, Faversham."

The greeting was addressed to another detective who entered the office at that moment. This was Dan Faversham, who frequently worked with Gray and was an experienced and clever sleuth.

"Good-morning, chief; good-morning, Gray. What's wanted, chief?"

"I'll tell you why I sent for you, Faversham. Do you remember the portrait painter who did the work for you some six months ago when you had your father and mother put on canvas?"

"Yes; George Forrest."

"Well, his wife has telephoned me from her home in the Bronx. It seems that he left the house at an early hour last evening, saying that he would be back by eleven at the latest, and might return much earlier than that. He has not returned and she is naturally alarmed, for she says that he is not the kind of man to stay away from his wife and home. All the hospitals for miles around have been phoned without result, and there is a strong probability that he has met with foul play."

Faversham's face expanded into a broad grin as the chief came to the end of his speech of information.

"Don't let the foul play idea interfere with your appetite, chief," he smilingly said, "because I can assure you that nothing serious has happened to Forrest."

"How do you know?"

"Well, you perhaps recall that I got a tip that Chicago Lizzie might light out for Brazil? I was down on the South American dock this morning looking for her, and who should I meet just going on board, carrying a grip, but George Forrest, the missing man."

"Are you positive about this, Faversham?"

"Why, chief, I stopped him and shook hands with him."

"How did he act?"

"Well, he acted peculiar. I've got an idea he didn't want to recognize me at first, but when I addressed him by name and told him my name, then he came to his senses and talked to me for a minute."

"What did he say?"

"Well, nothing of importance. Remarked that it was fine weather for sailing and said something about being in a hurry to get his stateroom to rights, and then he left me. I know that he was in a nervous condition, for when I first came upon him I put my hand on his shoulder and he jumped. For that matter he was plainly shaky when he left me."

"Have a woman with him, Faversham?"

"I didn't see any woman in his company, but she may have been on board the vessel waiting for him."

"Well," reflectively said the chief, "in spite of the reputation that his wife bestows on him, as I gathered from the phone conversation I had with her this morning, it seems to me that he must have been engaged in some very peculiar business. He had seen you often, had he not, while engaged in painting the portraits of your parents?"

"Half a dozen times at least, and chatted at length with me about the old folks."

"Then it is plain that his reluctance to recognize you was due to the fact that he was making a secret 'getaway,' and didn't want anybody to know about the matter."

"It looks that way, chief," admitted Faversham.

"There's no doubt of it. What was the name of the vessel that was on the point of sailing?"

"*The Southern Queen.*"

"Did you see her go out?"

"No, chief, I left the pier before she started."

The chief reflected a moment.

CHAPTER FOUR

RATS DESERT A SINKING SHIP!

"FAVERSHAM," said the chief, "I have lived long enough to learn that there is nothing sure in this world but death and rent day. Please call up the South American pier and find out if *The Southern Queen* really sailed, and if Mr. Forrest went out on her as a passenger."

Faversham turned y and entered the telephone booth. He could be heard calling up as the chief had directed. In less than three minutes he was out of the booth and regarding the chief with such a queer expression on his face that the latter chuckled and said inquiringly:

"The vessel didn't go?"

"You're right about that, chief," said Faversham, "but it all happened in a very strange way. The clerk in the office said that for a peculiar reason the crew deserted, and in the confusion that followed Mr. Forrest, who was booked as a passenger, had his leg broken on the deck."

"Well, that is odd. Where was Forrest taken?"

"The clerk didn't know, for he was not on duty at the time, and the one who was there will not be back for a couple of hours."

"But didn't he go in some ambulance?"

"Chief, I naturally asked that question, thinking that the name of the hospital would be a ready guide for us, but the clerk I was talking to told me the other clerk told him that Forrest was taken away in a carriage, which struck me as being further evidence of a desire to keep 'shady.'"

"That sounds reasonable."

The chief reflected for a moment and then made up his mind as to the next move in the matter.

"Faversham, while you're waiting for that other clerk, to get back to the dock where you can pump all he knows out of him, you had better run up and have a talk with Mrs. Forrest. My automobile is at the door, and you can make a swift run there and back. Don't say anything to her about what you have learned, for if he was running away with some other woman, which was highly probable, this accident will smash up the business, it is more than likely, and perhaps he'll send for his wife and spin a yarn that will satisfy her about his absence and the broken leg, too. The whole thing may blow over, and if I can save his wife any grief I'm going to do it. Find out what you can, and especially about the possibility of any other woman, and say whatever the circumstances suggest to you as likely to comfort her."

"All right, chief," said Faversham. "I'll start at once."

"And," said Marshall Gray, "as I want a brain clearer after all the puzzling items that have confused it this morning, I'll take the brisk, open-air ride up to the Bronx with you."

"Do so, Gray," smilingly said the chief, "for it may make you view that French girl in a different light. The way things stand now it looks like a 'crook' lover and a female accomplice."

"Perhaps you are right," assented Gray, and left the office with his chum.

They made a rapid run in the machine up to the Bronx and pulled up at a little cottage that stood in a luxuriantly flowering garden.

In answer to the ring at the bell the door was opened by a woman of middle age and refined appearance, whose reddened eyes told plainly enough that she had been weeping.

"Oh, it's Mr. Faversham," she exclaimed in a tone of relief. "I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have been sent to me, for you knew my husband well and I am sure that you will take a personal interest in the case."

"That is true, Mrs. Forrest," feelingly observed Faversham. Then he and Gray were ushered into a small, neatly furnished parlor.

As Marshall Gray entered the room he happened to cast his eyes on the wall immediately opposite the door, and he halted in his tracks. His gaze was fixed on a portrait in a gilt frame that hung on the wall, that of a man of middle age, with a fine aristocratic face, a very open cast of countenance, a good head of hair and a short, curling black beard.

For fully a minute Gray continued to gaze at the portrait, an odd, puzzled expression on his face, and then he crossed the room and placed one hand over the lower part of the countenance of the portrait and continued to study it long and earnestly.

So intently did the headquarters man gaze up at the face in the gilt frame that Mrs. Forrest was forced to note his rapt attention.

"That," she volunteered, "is a portrait of my husband which he lately finished and gave to me for a birthday present."

"A very fine-looking man," politely commented Gray, and then sat down with his eyes fixed on the portrait, while his ears were attentively inclined to catch the questions and answers that passed between Faversham and the lady of the house.

"Mrs. Forrest," said Faversham, "the chief has told me all that you told him on the wire this morning, and I want to ask you plainly what you suspect?"

"Talk plainly," the woman said.

"Well, I will," said Faversham. "Have you any reason to suspect that your husband went to meet anybody?"

"Please do not try to disguise your real question for fear of hurting me in my self-esteem as a wife, Mr. Faversham."

"Very well, then," desperately said Faversham. "Do you think that Mr. Forrest went to meet a woman?"

She smiled confidently.

"You may dismiss that idea from your mind, Mr. Faversham. My husband is not that kind of a man. You may think that I am giving utterance to the blind faith of a fond, foolish, trusting woman, but I tell you that in respect of that common failing among men, I can be sure of my knowledge of George Forrest. I will admit that there is much about him that I do not know, for he has always been reticent about his past life. Further than that he was married early in life and was a widower when he met me; I confess to knowing nothing. But that he is a faithful husband I absolutely do know. He was married before his first wife died, and he sorrowed deeply after her. More than that I do not know. There is that I can say about him since he married me, and it will enable you to fully understand the kind of man George Forrest is. He passes nearly all his time at home, and when he is not working at his portraits he is cultivating the flowers that you probably noticed in the garden. Flowers and perfumes are his two great passions, and his one extravagance is a hair pomade which contains a perfume imported from far-distant Arabia for which he pays a high price. Except when he carried a finished portrait home, I have never known him to be absent from the house so long as three hours."

"That sounds all right," admitted Faversham. "Can you tell me how he stood in his business affairs?"

"He makes a fair living as a portrait painter, and always has orders enough in advance to assure him of constant work at good prices."

"He may have lost money lately in speculation."

"Nothing of that kind has embarrassed him. I have access to his bankbook and checkbook. They show a balance of over a thousand dollars, which, within a hundred or so, more or less, has been the balance for years. I have called up his bank and assured myself of the correctness of the books."

"All this looks straight enough," said Faversham. "Well, what did he tell you about the nature of his absence from home last night? Take your time."

"Oh, it is easy to recall; he merely said that he had been called down to the city on a matter of important business and expected to be home again by eleven o'clock or before."

"Well, I have an idea that we shall get news of him before long, and, of course, I shall immediately communicate with you," consolingly said Faversham as he got up from his chair. "You know, of course, that nearly every day the papers contain accounts of persons wandering around sometimes for weeks without even knowing their names, so that now nothing in the way of mysterious disappearances surprises the police. Keep up a good heart, Mrs. Forrest, and be hopeful. I don't think that anything serious has happened to your husband, and I have the feeling that he will be restored to you before long."

"Oh, I hope so!" she exclaimed. "I am very thankful to you."

"Well, that's all for now," said Faversham. "We'll be getting downtown again."

"One minute," requested Gray. "Mrs. Forrest, please show me your husband's bedroom if it is convenient."

"Certainly," she said, and led the way up the stairs, the two detectives following silently after. On the first floor above she ushered them into a neat bedroom, the simple but artistic arrangements of which indicated that it was the apartment of a man of refinement.

On a dresser was a large box of pomade, and Gray at once picked it up and put it to his nose.

"Is this the Arabian perfume that you spoke about, Mrs. Forrest?" he asked, again sniffing at the jar.

"Yes, and it is very rare and costly."

"I have no doubt of it," said Gray, and removing the cover of the jar he took a small smear of the perfume on his forefinger, opened the back case of his watch and smeared the rare perfume on the inside of the case unseen.

"Now, Mrs. Forrest, please show me your husband's stock of underclothing, the kind he is now wearing."

"Here it is, all laid out for his use in this second drawer."

She opened the drawer in question, and the orderly array of underclothing was exposed to Gray's view. The headquarters man bent down, closely scrutinized the suits, lifted one out and inspected it closely, refolded it neatly, and then put it back in the drawer.

"That is all, thank you," he said, and then, with further assurances to the sorrowing woman that everything possible would be done in the matter, the two detectives left the house.

"Well," said Faversham, "that little woman does not know her husband as well as she might."

"You think so?"

"That's my idea of it," said Faversham.

"I don't agree with you," said Gray.

"Why, it's just another case of a trusting woman, a designing woman, and a man that's fallen a victim to a passion for the designing woman in the affair."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Gray.

Faversham turned swiftly on him and studied the strong face of the man he had worked with in many mysterious cases.

"Let's have it, Gray," he said, and then, with one sweeping glance at the chauffeur which assured him that the latter was attending strictly to business, Marshall Gray leaned over sideways and whispered into Faversham's ear a theory so very strange and startling that Dan's eyes grew round with wonder. Then he sat perfectly silent and thought deeply over the nature of the communication his friend had made to him.

"There's a possibility that you're right, Gray," he finally said.

"Well, Dan, I'm going to work on that possibility."

"It's the greatest I ever ran up against," said Faversham.

"There's a chance that my theory is right," said Gray, "and I'm going to work night and day to prove or disprove it, and the first thing I want you to do to help me is to run me down to the banker's house in this machine. On the way there I'll tell you fully about the case as it stands now, and you may be able to help me and I may be able to help you."

"I get the idea," said Dan, and they conversed very earnestly on their way down to the Strain mansion.

Arrived there, Gray at once sought out Maguire, who was still on duty in the main hallway.

"Inquest is all through," announced Maguire, "and the coroner has committed that young French woman to the Tombs."

A strange, tugging sensation assailed Gray's heart, but he made a powerful mental effort and put everything out of his mind except the business he was now intent on.

"I suppose the coroner questioned her about the matters that we know of?"

"Yes," said Maguire, "and she explained her threat against Mr. Strain by saying that he had made an insulting proposal to her, but she wouldn't explain that conversation she had with the young man that she met outside, nor would she say when she came back to the house after that meeting, or give them any satisfaction in any way. Everybody thinks that she was in league with her lover, that she let him into the house and hid him, and then let him have the paper-weight."

Unable to bear the gossip of the uniformed man, and having learned all he wanted to know from him about the French girl, Gray switched his inquiries and asked about Mrs. Strain and the son. He learned that the woman was said to be in a state of collapse, and that the son had testified unimportantly.

Gray joined Faversham and proposed that they take a run down to the South American dock.

"Yes, the clerk we want to see will probably be back by this time," assented Dan Faversham, and then gave the order to the driver.

They made a swift run to the dock, and the two detectives at once made their way to the office at the end of the pier.

"We telephoned here about a passenger named Forrest who was injured this morning," said Gray, displaying his badge. "Are you the clerk who was on duty at that time?"

"Yes, I'm the one that saw the accident," said the clerk, who seemed to be a chatty and gossipy fellow, "and it was the queerest business I ever saw in all my life, from the start to the finish. You see, *The Southern Queen* was all ready to start, and in less than ten minutes the gangplank would have been pulled in and she would have been headed for the Narrows. All at once in the silence that hung over the dock at that moment I heard a queer chorus of cries, sounds that indicated astonishment, and when I looked out through the office window I didn't blame the people on the dock for shouting their surprise, for I saw a stream of rats pour out from the ship and begin to make their way to the dock. Some passengers and the friends who were there to see them off were walking up and down the dock at that moment, and in less than five seconds they were all scurrying to the right and to the left, leaping on boxes and bales, especially ladies, who were screaming with fear, but they needn't have been afraid of the rats, for the little devils took not the slightest notice of them, but just came pouring over the side of the vessel in a steady stream.

"The rats kept coming faster and faster and in increasing numbers. Soon there were yells and screams from the cabins and berths, for the rats invaded all parts of the vessel when they came up out of the hold. Later on some ladies told me that they had to crouch in their berths and beat the little beasts off with umbrellas and canes to escape the nasty things.

"Finally it got so bad on board that men and women came rushing up from below and leaping from the rail to the dock, because the rats had possession of the gangplank, and a human being could not set a foot there.

"Among those whose came up from below and leaped from the rail to the dock was this Mr. Forrest. He landed on the dock all right, but then stood as though fas-

cinated by the enormous outpouring of rats. By that time the rodents were covering nearly the whole surface of the dock at this end, and making their way up toward the street, occasionally jumping to the dock or in through the open cargo port of some other vessel as they went along, and they didn't appear to pay attention to anybody. I never thought that so many rats could come out of the hold of one vessel, but finally the end of the procession appeared in sight, and right after it was another procession, made up of the crew. Right up here to the office they came just as I was handing some papers to their captain, and they told him that not for any money would they ship in *The Southern Queen*. 'I expected it,' the captain says to me, and explains that sailors have a superstition that rats know when a ship is doomed to sink and will always desert it before it sails. He added that there was no use making any fuss with the crew about it.

"Mr. Forrest was standing right behind the captain when the latter was talking, and what he heard seemed to upset him terribly. He was told that it might take several days in view of what had taken place, and then Mr. Forrest said something about not being able to afford so much time and must make other arrangements at once, and asks me to order a taxi for him while he was getting his baggage out of the cabin. I order a taxi for him, and out of his cabin he comes, carrying a heavy valise, and tells me that he'll send an order for his trunk, which had gone down in the hold for the voyage. Along comes the taxi I had ordered for him, and I pointed it out to him, and just as he was making his way toward it along comes another machine that had been ordered for another of the passengers. I think Mr. Forrest must have been very much upset by the delay in starting, which probably meant some sort of loss to him, and it was perfectly plain that he was terribly excited. I suppose that put him in a confused state of mind, for as he went toward the machine I had pointed out to him and the other machine came along Mr. Forrest dodged first to one side and then to the other, and then forward and back so that the driver of the second machine had no chance to pass him in safety. He was struck and knocked down, and one leg was broken. We ran out, lifted him up, and meant to bring him into this office and send for a surgeon from one of the ships near at hand, but he caught sight of a man on the dock that he seemed to know, told us to stop, and then called to this man. He whispered something to the man and then was taken away in the taxi, the man going along with him."

"That's a remarkably interesting story," said Gray at the conclusion of the recital, willing to compliment this clerk, who evidently loved the sound of his own voice. "Now you say that he called to this man whom he seemed to know, and who responded to the summons and later on went with him in the taxi?"

"Yes, that is right."

"When he called to him, just exactly what did he say, if you noticed the words and can recall them?"

"I remember the very words. Mr. Forrest said:

" 'Bill, I want you.'

"And did Bill respond promptly to the summons?"

"Yes, he responded promptly enough to the summons, but it struck me that while Mr. Forrest knew Bill all right, Bill didn't seem to know him."

Gray leaned forward in the intense interest that this comment on the part of the clerk aroused.

"But after Mr. Forrest had spoken to Bill did the latter seem to recognize him all right?"

"What do you want?" growled Bill. "The pleasure of your society for a short time," said the detective, seating himself on the bed.

"Well, no, you couldn't exactly call it recognition," asserted the clerk. "To me it seemed that he was still puzzled to a certain extent over the gentleman calling to him, but Mr. Forrest evidently said something that satisfied him, for he worked fast to get him into the taxi and leave the dock with him."

"Oh, he seemed to be in a hurry to get Forrest away?"

"That is sure. For that matter Mr. Forrest certainly was, and I got the impression that he would go on board some other ship bound for South America as soon as possible and trust to the ship's surgeon to set his leg and care for him on the voyage."

"Did he say anything of that character?"

"Well, there was a great deal of excitement at that time, and I can't be sure just what was said about that matter, but that is my impression, and I am inclined to believe that I am quoting him."

"Very likely you are, for you are a shrewd and observant fellow, and your mere impressions are valuable. Now, in regard to this man Bill who was summoned by Forrest; did you happen to know him?"

"No, I don't recollect that I ever saw him before, but still he might be one of the regular dock loungers."

"Can you describe him for me?"

"I can do better than that," smilingly asserted the clerk, and picked up a sheet of paper and a pencil.

With swift, sure strokes that showed proficiency and a high degree of natural ability in the work he made his sketch, the detective watching him with frank interest, for he was intensely concerned in everything relating to the mysterious disappearance of George Forrest, and what the communicative clerk had told him had very fully aroused his curiosity in regard to the man who had been summoned to assist Forrest in leaving the dock.

In less than three minutes the gifted clerk had finished his sketch and then handed the piece of paper to Gray. The sheet bore the head and face of a pock-marked man of apparent middle age, bullet-headed and fox-eyed.

"There," complacently said the clerk, who was evidently

quite proud of himself and his artistic ability, "that's better than a verbal description of the man, isn't it?"

"A thousand times better," admitted Gray as he regarded the sketch with great appreciation. "I suppose that's about all the information you have for me in regard to this matter, isn't it?"

"That's all," was the reply, "and I know my business too well to ask questions of men from police headquarters, but if Mr. Forrest sends for that trunk or Bill comes around this dock again I'll not fail to let you know promptly on the phone."

"That's right," approvingly said Gray, and then he thanked and commended the clerk, and holding the sketch in his hand he left the office, rejoined Faversham and walked with the latter down the long dock. Near the street end of the dock he came to a halt and handed the sketch to his companion.

"Dan, do you know that 'mug'?"

Faversham looked long and earnestly at the picture so recently drawn by the accomplished clerk of the steamship company.

"Yes, it's Brocky Bill Corse," he announced.

"Without the shadow of a doubt," assented Gray. "One flash at it was enough for me, for Bill has a peculiar countenance and one that is not very likely to be forgotten."

"It's Bill, all right."

"Dan, do you know where Brocky Bill hangs out these days?"

"Why, Marshall, he's not supposed to hang out anywhere."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Haven't you heard about Bill?"

Marshall Gray felt a little apprehensive shock run over him as he thought of the possible meaning of Faversham's words.

"Do you mean that he's dead?"

"Oh, no, he's got a new 'lay,' that's all."

"I see. What is it?"

"Bill gives out that he has reformed, been converted and all that sort of thing, and when he has been picked up once or twice in the last year or so he has convinced the magistrate and some gullible church folks that he is being hounded by the police, who are constantly persecuting him and trying to prevent him from earning an honest living. He claims that all sorts of jobs have been put up on him to land him in jail. You know what sort of songs such chaps as Brocky Bill Corse sings?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard them."

"But I'm older in the detective service than you are, Gray, and I tell you that there never was an honest drop of blood in Bill's veins, and what is more, there never will be. I can say so confidently, for I know the family history, and that is a sure guide. His father was a desperate cracksman who never hesitated to kill in order to assure a haul or to make a 'getaway.' His mother passed half of her life in jail. Brocky Hill Corse is a dyed-in-the-wool crook."

"Well," reflectively said Gray, "I want to see Bill and have a talk with him, so I must find out some of his haunts."

"Hold on," musingly said Faversham. "I'm sure one of the boys was speaking of seeing him some time ago. Now where did he say he saw him?"

He stood gazing abstractedly down at the flooring of the dock, and Marshall Gray waited in anxious silence.

"Why, of course!" suddenly exclaimed Faversham. "I might have known that any chap who was playing the religious dodge would keep up that end of the fake. He was at one of those missions, praying fervidly, and telling the rest of the people he'd been saved from a life of crime."

"Good. Do you recall the name of the mission?"

"I think it was called the Helping Hand."

"Excellent! That was the very name that I had in my mind. Now, please drop me at the Tombs, and then you can report to the chief all that we have found out and give him my theory in regard to the double mystery."

"I'll do it," said Faversham, "and much as the chief has been mixed up in odd cases with mysterious motives and queer plots underlying them, I am willing to make a wager that this theory of yours will make him sit up and take notice."

"I think that way myself," said Gray.

"And you want me to set you down at the Tombs, eh?" said Faversham, with a low chuckle that brought a flush to Gray's face. "Of course, you are going to call on some man imprisoned there?"

"Oh, you go to the devil!" responded Marshall Gray, and instead of being in any degree offended by the reply Faversham chuckled again.

CHATER FIVE

IN THE TOMBS

TWENTY minutes later a keeper unlocked the door of a cell and ushered Gray into the narrow confines.

"A visitor for you, young lady," he said.

Hortense Delgarde was sitting on a bench in a most disconsolate attitude, her head in her hands. She looked up to encounter the gaze of the detective, and what she saw in his face caused a slow crimson to mount to her pale cheeks.

She got up from the bench, and he could see that she had been crying.

"Miss Delgarde," he said feelingly, "do not think that I have come here to add to your miserv."

"Oh, no, I have no such thought as that," she murmured.

"Matters have turned out just as I said they would," he remarked. "Here you are in a prison cell, utterly innocent of crime, and yet you are charged with murder. I am on the track of clues that may, I trust, fully establish your innocence, but I cannot be positive of such a result. Meanwhile you must languish here, your name the sport of idle tongues, your reputation a football for those who feast on the details of sensation. I may fail to clear you. You will not speak, even though the shadow of the electric chair hangs over you."

She recoiled in terror at his plain speech.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, her beautiful eyes turned up appealingly as though speaking to her Creator, "how utterly alone and friendless I am!"

The anguish in her tones went to his heart like a knife, and in a moment Gray was aware of another sensation much more compelling than those which had possessed him when he spoke to her in her room. A conviction stole over him with irresistible force that the primitive man in him had been awakened, and that he was experiencing the desire to shield and protect his mate.

He strode forward and took her hand.

She looked up wonderingly at him, and what she read in his face made her senses swim. She reeled and would have fallen had he not caught her in his eager arms, which closed lovingly around her. She half-opened her eyes.

"I can stand now, thank you," she said, but as she uttered the words he felt her thrill in his embrace.

"Wait," he gently said, "for I do not think that you are really able to stand alone for a moment."

She made no response, and trying to make his voice steady, which was a difficult task, Gray went on: "If I do not offend you I would like to support you for a moment until you've recovered your strength a little. Listen to me, Hortense, for I will call you by that name this once, even though I may never presume to so address you again. "I am thirty-five years old, and my police career has had a hardening effect on me where women are concerned. Never until this day have I felt that one of them had touched and vibrated the chords of my affections. I cannot speak in terms of eloquence, but there is something about you that has awakened what I recognize as love in my heart! There seems to be a small voice within me whispering that you are the mate designed for me, and the sweet passion you have created in my breast seems to

confer the right to command that you open your lips and answer the questions I asked you this morning; to break the silence that has consigned you to this cell. Dearest girl, I do not ask if you return my love, for I am too much astonished at what I feel myself to dream that as sudden a passion has assailed you also. But I say that my love for you, the sincere and respectful love of an honest man, calls on you to unburden your mind of its secret, confirm the impression I have formed, and to give me the right to save you from the awful fate that threatens. I am speaking out of my innermost heart, Hortense, and in the name of a sacred love I command you to tear away this fabric of circumstances which seems to brand as a criminal the woman I regard as the sweetest, the dearest, the loveliest on earth!"

He still held her closely as he poured forth his newly found eloquence, and as she listened to his impassioned utterances the color stole slowly back to her cheeks, and she thrilled at the intensity of his expressions.

Then, with a faint smile, she gently disengaged herself from his close and ardent embrace, sat down on the bench, and pondered for a moment. Anxiously the detective watched her. Different matters that had come under his observation since he arrived at the banker's mansion that morning had brought to life a theory most bold and startling in regard to the murder. It was a theory which pointed away from this charming French girl, but he could not yet feel confident of ever being able to establish his idea.

If fortune favored him he might hope to reveal a most astonishing scheme of robbery and murder; one which would make the oldest detectives on the force gasp with astonishment.

Yes, it would be a revelation which would cause a nation of readers to stare with wonder at the printed lines telling of devilish ingenuity and cold-blooded disregard of human life. But, if he failed to establish his theory, and hold up the real criminal to the eyes of the world, then nothing would save this sweet girl from indictment and conviction.

Her quarrel with Archibald Strain only a short time before the murder and her unfortunate threat, made in the excess of her outraged innocence, seemed to dovetail with what had been overheard in the street by Blifkins. In the face of her silence it made a strong case against her. The use of the heavy paper-weight (the ownership of which she did not deny) added still another link in the chain against her.

All this went through the detective's mind as he stood and watched her.

Suddenly she looked up.

"Do you really believe that I am in danger?" she asked tremulously.

"If I fail to establish the theory I am working on and meet with defeat, nothing can save you from the ignominy of an indictment and the agony of a trial. I doubt that you could be convicted by any twelve men on the evidence adduced. Certainly not of murder in the first degree. But they might arrive at a verdict that would consign you to prison for many years. Look at the situation: Here is a man prominent in banking, social and religious circles found murdered in his home, and under circumstances which point to robbery as the motive for the crime. The testimony before the coroner establishes the matters you know of, and yet you refuse to explain. What must be the result? There will be a police clamor for a victim, and because you are believed to have a lover whom you are shielding, you will certainly be indicted and tried for the crime. So much has been established that you cannot escape indictment and trial. And much more will be established, for the most trifling matters will be twisted into damning evidence of importance."

She shivered apprehensively as she listened, and then looked up with an inquiring light in her eyes.

"Please answer one question for me," she said. "If a man left this city on an express train last night at half-past eight, what time would he arrive at Niagara Falls?"

It required but a very brief period of deliberation on the part of the headquarters man to reply to the question.

"He would get to the American side of the falls in ten hours, and from that point it would take him but a very short time to cross over into Canada."

"Then he is undoubtedly safe there now," she murmured in a tone and with a sigh, both indicating relief. "And in the face of the danger which you say menaces me, I feel justified in breaking my silence. I know very little of law, but I doubt that he can be brought back from there for his offense."

"And who is he that you speak of?" pointedly asked the detective.

He tried to ask the question lightly and in a natural and offhand manner as though the response mattered but little to him, but he was aware of a queer feeling in his heart at the time.

"I am speaking of my brother Gaston," she said, and the words brought joy to Marshall Gray's heart. "We are orphans, and came to this city together ten years ago from our home in France. Gaston has always been wild and dissipated, and I have dreaded that he would get into trouble. His associates were like himself, but until a short time ago I am convinced that he never did anything criminal. But now he has done something that will probably prevent him from ever returning to this city again. He was employed by a commission firm to conduct their foreign correspondence and had a good position and a fair salary, but he squandered every dollar that he made. More than that, and infinitely worse, he got heavily in debt, and then became the prey of his associates. They threatened him with exposure to his firm unless he paid up, knowing full well that he had converted some money to his own use that belonged to the firm. It was not really embezzlement, but only what is termed a breach of trust. But it would cause him to lose his situation, and that they knew very well. By working on his fears they finally got him to lend his aid to a scheme to defraud his employers. However, the scheme went wrong before anything really was effected. So cleverly, however, had Gaston's evil companions done their work that it was inevitable that whenever the plot came to be known the entire blame would appear to rest on him. He saw his danger, realized that the trick must surely come to light in an investigation that was pending, saw also that his several breaches of trust would be exposed, and that he would be suspected of being the central figure in the big swindle.

"He became terribly alarmed and decided that his only safety lay in fleeing to Canada. His evil companions had stripped him of money, and that compelled him to turn to me. He called me on the phone in the afternoon and made me promise to meet him in the evening. Over the wire he did not dare to tell me what it was that he wanted. The accents of fright in his voice caused me to consent. I had kept away from him for over a year and had warned Gaston not to imperil my employment by calling on me, and he had obeyed. Now there was no doubt in my mind that he was in great trouble, and when the appointed time came I hastened to the meeting.

"He told me his trouble and said that if I did not give him money to leave the country he was liable to arrest. He asked for every dollar of my savings and also for my jewelry, swearing that in another country he would make a fresh start and live a good and honest life. He demanded that I at once return to the house and get my valuables and at once return to him. It was then that I uttered the words of remonstrance that were overheard and twisted into such a terrible meaning following the discovery of the murder. He would consider no delay, but swore that he would end all that very night by throwing himself in the river in his desperation. I can fully understand the awful significance of the conversation that was heard by Blifkins when viewed in the light of the robbery and murder. But now you know the truth." As she ceased speaking she turned her great eyes full on the much interested detective and asked: "Do you believe me?"

"Of course I do," he responded, "and you have taken

a great load from my mind. For whom did your brother work?"

"Carncross & Dilworthy, South street."

"Well, I shall know if they enlisted the aid of the police, and will keep you informed in that respect. They may never go so far as to even start a search for him, and I may yet bring you that intelligence. What you tell me makes me think that he has not done anything really criminal; that is, no such intent has been really carried out. If there has been no money loss, the firm would not be eager to get after him. However, let him go for the present. As for yourself I am in a position to establish your innocence by telling your story and having the principal points of it substantiated by what could be learned from Carncross & Dilworthy, and then there would be no great trouble in getting you out on bail. Unless you strongly object I would like you to stay here while I am working up the theory and clues I spoke about, and which, worked out fully, will land the murderer in jail and set you free. What do you say?"

She flashed an inquiring glance at him.

"Do I understand that I can be of assistance to you in the murder case by staying a short time longer in jail?"

"Yes; that is it. The fact that you are a prisoner here will tend to lull the real criminal into fancied security."

"Then there can be but one answer to that. I will stay."

"Thank you, Miss Delgarde."

The rich color was once more back in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled with a humorous light as she said:

"Why not Hortense, as before?"

He smiled down on her.

"Will you permit me?"

"Isn't it rather late to ask my permission?" she roguishly asked.

"Perhaps it is," he smilingly admitted. "I am a little ashamed of my assurance in that respect."

"You need not be," she said, looking up frankly at him, "for the manner in which you used it could not be offensive to the most particular person, and certainly was not to me."

"I feel relieved. And you are very sure that you will not mind remaining here in prison for a short time to serve me?"

"The knowledge that I am serving such a friend as you, the sole hand stretched out in the hour of my peril, will afford me such pleasure that the hours will fly by on golden wings."

"Thank you—Hortense. By the way, I also have a given name."

"I shall be pleased to know it," she said, and gave him a glance that made his heart flutter wildly. "What is it?"

"It is Marshall."

"It has a French sound that makes it doubly agreeable to my ears."

"I rejoice to know it. Hortense, I will frankly confess that you have, in a few short hours, fairly bewitched me, and have also exploded all my ideas of love between the sexes, which I have always maintained was a matter that slowly grew from a combination of acquaintance, respect, admiration and association. I have not hesitated to make you aware of the state of my feelings, very much to my own astonishment.

"However," went on the detective, "I have some glimmerings of sanity left, and I am not going to make any further avowal to you, nor am I going to ask you how you regard me, either, while you are immured in this cell under a false charge. But, just as soon as I can get you out of here, no matter how that may be accomplished, I shall have some questions of a very delicate nature to ask you. Meanwhile my constant efforts will be directed to hunting down the real robber and murderer, and when that is accomplished I shall come to you. Until then, Hortense, good-by."

"Marshall, good-by, and believe that my prayers will go with you. And without violating maidenly modesty, let me say that I regard you as a man of whose love any woman might be proud; that until I see you again my thoughts will constantly dwell on your avowal, and the mere thought that I have created such love in a man will serve to make this prison cell a paradise to me." He left the cell.

She gave him her hand through the bars as she spoke, and bending over the small fingers the detective pressed his lips to them.

So rapid had been the succession of exciting events since the time when he had been sent down to look into the affair of the Chelsea Bank, that the detective had forgotten that there was such a custom as eating a mid-day meal. But, after he had walked a dozen blocks away from the Tombs, with his feet on the sidewalk and his head in rose-tinted clouds, Marshall Gray became aware that he had a stomach as well as a heart, and made his way to a restaurant.

He ate his lunch in a reflective mood.

"Pretty hard hit," the detective admitted to himself, with a sheepish grin and a shake of his head, "but what a darling she is!"

Before he left the restaurant he called up headquarters and got Faversham on the wire.

"Any news from the South American dock, Dan?"

"No."

"Well, I would like you to stay right there in the office and wait for news to come, for I can't believe that it will be very long delayed. You may have to wait until to-morrow, but I hardly think longer than that, for the clerk on the dock said that Forrest had only a suit-case with him, and it is certain that he will send for that trunk. No matter how long you have to wait, you hang on for that information while I try to find Brocky Bill Corse. If I find him that will serve the same purpose and leave you free to do something else. But the fellow may be keeping shady, and I may not be able to get my 'lamps' on him. That leaves us only the trunk to enable us to find Forrest."

"I'll hang around until I hear from the South American dock or from you."

"All right," said Gray, and hung up the receiver.

He deliberated a moment, and then made his way uptown and direct to the Strain mansion, where he found Maguire still on duty.

"Maguire," he asked, "when that note was delivered this morning at the front door did you happen to see the person who brought it?"

"Yes. I was standing right here, and had a clear view all the way down the hallway to where the man stood on the doorstep."

"Would you be able to recognize the man if you saw him again?"

"I think I would, Mr. Gray."

The detective drew forth the pencil sketch that the clerk on the South American dock had made and held it up before the eyes of the uniformed man.

Maguire regarded it earnestly.

"Yes, that's the man," he said.

"All right," said Gray, and he put the sketch carefully away in his pocket. "Have you noticed anything new?"

"Only that young Strain roams around the house every half-hour or so, biting his mustache and acting as though he had the biggest kind of a grouch on his mind."

"No grief, eh?"

"No, nothing but a grouch, and seems to be keeping up the largest sort of thinking all the time. He certainly looks worried."

"Well, keep your eyes and ears open, Maguire, and when your relief comes, tell him what you know, and let him understand what is wanted."

Then the detective walked away and made for the Unique barber-shop mentioned by Hawkins as the place where the banker was always shaved. The proprietor was standing by the door.

"Are you the boss?" asked Gray.

"Yes, I'm the boss."

"Well, you've lost a fine customer in the death of the banker around the corner, Archibald Strain," said Gray, in a chatty style which he knew would please a barber.

"I should say I have," was the mournful response. "Why, that gentleman came for his shave every day, either in the morning or the afternoon, and never tipped me less than a quarter."

"Well, anyhow," said the detective, "you'll save something on the perfumes that he always used on his hair and face."

The man threw up his hands with an odd gesture.

"That's what made him such a valuable customer," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Why," said the barber, "I mean that most men are worse than the women for such things; they want to be scented up so that it makes a decent man sick. But Mr. Strain wouldn't have even bay rum used on his face. Nothing but water on his face and his hair," and the barber sighed mournfully.

Gray nodded sympathetically to the man and walked away with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face.

"It looks better and better all the time," he muttered. "Oh, if I can only get my eyes on Brocky Bill Corse."

He spent the balance of the day in making inquiries of brother officers whom he met in different parts of the town and ascertained from more than one that the man he sought had been seen occasionally at the Helping Hand Mission when detectives had gone there hunting for men who were "wanted." But none of the sleuths he met and questioned knew where Bill lived.

He called on the police captain who had charge of the Chelsea Bank affair, and learned from him that nothing new had transpired since morning except the hints that had been dropped by some of the directors of the bank when they had called at the police station to see the captain. They all hinted a belief that the cashier must know something about the affair, even though he might not have had a direct hand in it, basing their assumptions on the fact that the combination of the vault had been known only to the absent vice-president, the president and Upton.

"They want me to watch Upton very closely," said the captain, "and I am doing so. In fact, there is nobody else to suspect."

"That's the way things look," said Gray.

"And yet you believe he is innocent?"

"I do, and if I have good luck in following up some clues that have come into my hands in a short time I'll clear him."

"Meanwhile," said the captain, with a skeptical expression, "although he is still at liberty he is virtually a prisoner, and will not be able to leave the city without being nabbed by my men. I know you're strong on impressions, Mr. Gray, but Upton is the man that all the facts point to as the brains of this affair, and he's not going to get away from me, you can be sure."

"That's right," said Gray, "and without mentioning any names to the newspaper men you might say something like that to them."

"I have already done so."

"Good!" said Gray, and with a smile on his face he walked out of the police station.

"There is no doubt whatever that the murderer will read the afternoon papers, and what he will see in them will cause him to chuckle at his own cleverness and the stupidity of the police," soliloquized Gray as he walked along. "What he reads will lull him into a false sense of security, and if he feels safe enough he may make some move that will enable me to put my hands on him."

The evening came and found the detective sitting at the rear of the large room where the services of the Helping Hand Mission were held.

There he remained until the close of the meeting, apparently listening interestedly to the exhortations of the earnest, pale-faced man who pleaded with his congregation to live a pure life, and also to the experiences of the many who had been saved from vice, drunkenness and a pauper's grave; but as a matter of fact he took little notice of what was going on around him, but constantly kept his eyes fixed on the door through which all entered.

He acknowledged to a feeling of disappointment as he left the room.

"But Bill is my only hope unless that clerk phones us that the trunk has gone and has been followed and located," ran the detective's soliloquy, "so here I must come night after night and wait for him unless I get the information I want sooner."

He found accounts in the evening papers that pleased him greatly.

The arrest of Hortense Delgarde and all the peculiar testimony about her was blazoned forth in many conspicuously leaded columns, together with the expressed opinion of the coroner that he had not the slightest doubt that the French girl knew all about the death of the banker. But what pleased Gray were the columns devoted to late accounts of the affair of the Chelsea Bank, together with a lengthy interview with the captain of police, and these accounts made Gray grin hopefully.

"Just the right sort of stuff to allay any alarm in the right quarter, and that is what I want," he muttered. "The murderer must be chuckling to himself."

The first thing the next morning he phoned to headquarters and got his chum Dan Faversham on the wire, learning that nothing had come from the South American dock as yet, but that the clerks had been communicated with and told to watch out sharply, and that the answer had come back that they fully understood the importance of the work that had been left in their hands, and that the trunk would not leave the dock without being keenly trailed.

All day long Marshall Gray went from one thieves' haunt to another, hoping to get a glimpse of Brocky Bill Corse or to learn where he lived. He met with no success in that direction, but stuck to his work until the coming of night, stoutly resisting an impulse to go to the Tombs and gratify himself with a sight of Hortense Delgarde.

"No," he decided, "when I go there again it must be with words on my lips that will assure her of having her name cleared of this awful accusation."

And he resolutely kept away from the prison.

A little after eight he was seated in an obscure corner of the Helping Hand Mission and had not been there five minutes when his man walked into the room and took a seat well up front.

After the minister had concluded a prayer the "reformed" rogue at once arose to his feet.

"My friends," he said, "you have heard the minister speak of snatching brands from the burning, and I may confidently call myself a brand. Oh, my friends, how I wish I had the gift of eloquence, so that I might stir the blood in your innermost hearts, and so make you feel what religion has done for me. With shame, and at the same time with pride—shame for what I was, pride for the change that has been made in me—I confess that up to the time when I became converted in this mission I led a life of crime. Now I lead an honest life, trying to do as I would be done by, and although I lack many of the comforts and luxuries that once I was able to command I am content, for my conscience is at rest."

Nauseated by what he knew to be hypocritical cant, Gray got up and walked outside, leaving Bill still telling the congregation the story of his evil life and his wonderful redemption.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STORY OF A BURGLARY

THE sleuth had his man "spotted," and was content to wait any length of time for him. He took up his station within the shadow of a deep hallway and watched the door of the mission.

Half an hour later Brocky Bill Corse came out, and a near-at-hand light showed the sneering grin on his face.

The street at the time was nearly deserted. Close to

the door of the mission there was an old blind man selling papers, and on the table that served him as a stand were arranged the different evening publications and also little piles of coins, cents, dimes and quarters being neatly arranged for making change.

The "reformed" thief took a cent from his pocket and then looked swiftly up and down the street.

"I have taken a paper, brother," he said, pausing beside the blind man and picking up a paper as he spoke, "and here is the money."

"Thank you," said the blind man, accepting the cent, and then Bill leaned over the table, ran his long fingers deftly over the neat pile of quarters and very silently lifted them from the table. Holding them firmly in his hand, so that they might not clink together and betray him, he walked fifty feet away and then put them in his pocket.

"Oh, yes, there's no doubt that you're a brand from the burning, not the slightest doubt of it," muttered the detective as he shadowed Bill along the street, keeping close to the buildings and walking noiselessly on rubber-soled shoes with which he had provided himself. "Dan Faversham had you down about right."

Gray did not have to shadow his man very far, for Bill soon went up the steps of an old-fashioned house not many blocks from the mission, and when he had entered the door the detective ran swiftly and noiselessly after him and was in time to hear Corse walking up the first flight of stairs. He heard him unlock the door of a room on the first floor above, and also heard the sound made by the closing of a door.

The house was one of those dwellings occasionally found in a neighborhood mostly given over to tall tenements. It had once been the home of a well-to-do family, but had now been converted into three living floors at cheap rents, and the front door was always open for the ingress and egress of those who occupied the three floors. Gray made his way up to the first floor and saw a light shining through the window of a transom of the room that his ears told him Bill had entered.

Gray wanted to come face to face with Bill and talk to him, but he did not forget prudence.

While it was true that he had heard Bill put a key in a lock and turn it, and had also heard the closing of a door, that was no proof to the detective that there were not other occupants of the room. Although Gray was a man of tried courage, and well armed, he did not mean to jeopardize all that he was interested in by walking into a den of thieves.

Silently walking on his rubber-soled shoes, he ascended the first half-dozen steps of the next flight of stairs, and so was able to peer into Bill's room through the glass of the transom.

The interior was lit up by two bright jets of gas, one on either side of a dresser, and standing in front of the dresser was Bill.

He was alone in the room.

As the detective watched him he saw him unlock a drawer of the dresser and take out something which Gray, even at that distance, and with only the merest glance, decided were false whiskers.

Bill laid them down on the dresser, and then took what looked to be a strip of grayish paper, picked up a pair of scissors, and cut off a portion of the grayish stuff about two inches long and half an inch wide.

This section he passed over his tongue, and then, with his eyes fixed on the mirror, carefully applied the section under one eye, directing one end of it so that it came close to the side of his nose.

Then he took out of the drawer a small alcohol lamp, lit it, and then carefully passed the backs of the whiskers over the flame with a slight, swift movement that did not permit them to scorch. Back and forth for a dozen times he made the movements, and then, with a dexterous touch that told of long practice, he struck them against his cheeks, high up.

When he removed his hands the whiskers adhered firmly to his face.

By this time the section of material that he had cut from the grayish-looking paper had dried, and in drying had contracted strongly, presenting now the appearance of a scar an inch and a quarter long and three-eighths of an inch wide. The disfiguring scar and the short, puffy side-whiskers which now adorned Bill's face so altered the man's appearance that the detective nodded his head in silent approval of the artistic character of the work the rascal had done.

"He's getting ready for a job of some sort," the detective decided as he noted the transformation. "Somehow or other he strongly impresses me with the idea that I've seen——"

At that moment Bill turned so that the detective got his first full face view of him.

He stopped short in his soliloquy and stared intently at Bill as the latter stood revealed in the well-lighted room, and something that struck him in the full face view he now had of the man caused him to gasp as though he experienced difficulty in getting his breath. Then he softly murmured:

"After all these years I've found him. By all that's remarkable, I'm certainly in the greatest luck! He is the man, and what I know will serve as a key to unlock his unwilling lips. It's a great piece of luck!"

Noiselessly Gray ascended the stairs to the next floor and then took off his rubber shoes and put them into the side pockets of his sack coat.

Then, with a clever imitation of a careless, heedless boy descending the flight in a hurry, he went clattering down the stairs, creating a noise that he was sure must be heard by the occupant of the first floor front room. Flipperty-flop, flipperty-flop down the stairs Gray came, just as he imagined a rather eager and excited boy would descend, and then stumped up to Bill's door and knocked lightly on the panels.

"Well?" came from within.

"Please, sir," piped Gray, in a juvenile squeak, "I'm the boy that lives upstairs, and I've got a package for you. A man left it about an hour ago. He says to tell yer that it's from the man with the broken leg, and he'll gimme a quarter in the mornin' if he finds out that I handed it over."

"All right, wait a minute," came from within the room, and a moment later the door was opened not more than six inches and a hand was thrust forth through the opening.

But Marshall Gray had put his foot between the door and the jamb the moment he could introduce it, and now he put his strong shoulder against the panels and forced the door wide open.

Corse was standing close to the door and wholly unprepared for any such violence. The impact hurled him half a dozen feet away. Gray strode in and closed the door.

"I'm the package, Bill," he said coolly.

With one swift glance the detective swept the room. He had been able to view the interior very fairly from his position on the stairs, and had seen that there was a bed in one corner, but had not been able to get a very comprehensive view of it. Now he saw it clearly and was satisfied that it was unoccupied, but the tumbled covers seemed to suggest that it had been recently used. Bill stared wonderingly at the detective, and Marshall Gray smiled broadly back at him.

"That's a very clever make-up, Bill," he said. "There's not a man on the force but what would pass you by without a second glance."

"What do you want?"

"Oh, only a little confab."

"You've got nothing against me. I'm living a 'straight' life now."

"Of course you're straight. I had no doubt of that when I saw you lift that stack of quarters from the table of the blind man outside the Helping Hand Mission only a little while ago."

Bill's jaw dropped at that.

"What do you want?" he snarled.

"The pleasure of your society for a short while," said the detective, seating himself on the bed. "Don't try to humbug me, for it will not work. You are a thief, the son of a thief, and you'll be a thief as long as you live. Sit down and let us take it easy while we talk."

With an almost inarticulate growl Bill sat down, and the detective asked:

"Now, Bill, where is the man with the broken leg?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," snapped the crook.

"And yet you expressed no surprise when you thought a boy stood outside your door and told you that he had a package from the man with the broken leg, did you, Bill? The man I am speaking of is the one you took away from the South American dock, the man for whom you carried the note up to the residence of Banker Archibald Strain. You know the man I refer to, Bill, and you can see that I know that you know. There is no use in beating around the bush. Where is he?"

"See here, Gray," snapped the thief angrily, "it doesn't make a particle of difference whether I know what you're talking about or not. The one fact that sticks in me is that you haven't got anything on me, and simply because you're a detective doesn't give you any right to come in here by force and bully me. I order you out of my room, and if you don't go, I'll throw you out."

The man with the broken leg turned his face towards them. Two impulsive cries burst forth: "Archibald!" "Father!". "Hush!" said the injured man.

He half arose from his seat as he spoke, but Gray thrust forth a sinewy hand with a swift movement, caught him by the throat and jammed him down on the chair again with great force. Bill's right hand flew to his hip-pocket, but the watchful detective gave him such a violent shake that the half-drawn revolver clattered to the floor, while the man's teeth rattled like castanets.

"So, you thief," quietly said Marshall Gray, "you think that you can stand out against me because there's nothing on you, eh? Is that right?"

"Yes, it is," snarled Bill.

"Why, the prison doors are open for you at this very minute, and you are headed straight for them if certain things about you are told at headquarters. Just listen to this interesting little story."

Bill growled impatiently, but the detective only smiled derisively at the much puzzled rascal.

"About five years ago," began Marshall Gray, "an ambitious young policeman who expected promotion to the detective service went on duty for the first time after a long and severe illness."

Gray stopped long enough to give the pistol a kick that sent it spinning over the floor to a safe distance, and then went on with his story:

"It was an extremely cold night when he started out to patrol his beat, which lay along the streets west of Broadway. The sickness he had lately passed through had thinned his blood, and the bitter cold and the biting wind made him shiver.

"As he passed along a row of stores, trying the doors to see if they were secure, he came to a middle-class jewelry store, a rather old-fashioned place which covered up its windows at night with wooden shutters. This jewelry store was nothing like the sort found on Broadway, but it carried a large and valuable stock of watches and diamonds. As the officer tried the door the curtain was moved aside and a man in a linen duster stood before him, holding a coal scuttle. He looked at the policeman, nodded in a friendly way, and then unlocked the door. 'It's a terrible night, officer,' he said, 'and it wouldn't do you a bit of harm to warm yourself at the fire. You look half frozen.' 'And that's the way I feel,' admitted the policemen as he stepped inside and allowed the man in the linen duster to close the door. 'I've never done such a thing as this before, but I'll chance the roundsman to warm up.' Yes, you're justified in taking a chance such a terrible night as this,' the man in the linen duster said. 'Sit right down here close to the fire. When I tell the boss that I had a policeman in here he'll be glad to know it. We've just got the new spring goods in, and there's many a thousand dollars' worth of stuff that a burglar could carry off in an ordinary hand-satchel, so it will please him to know that an officer was right on this beat. There's been a big lot of robberies lately.' Then the man in the linen duster scratched his bare head, looked well at the fire as though estimating its condition, finally shook it well down, picked up the scuttle again and said he'd get some more coal from the cellar.

"'You just take your time and get thoroughly warmed before you venture out again into that awful cold and that piercing wind,' the man in the linen duster said in a very kind way, 'or you may do yourself lasting harm. Now, by the way, I've got a little good whisky behind the counter, and a good swig wouldn't do you a bit of harm.'

"The policeman declined the whisky, but sat there for fully ten minutes, getting thoroughly warmed, while the man in the linen duster went around the store sweeping and dusting and carrying packages from the front of the place to the rear. Then, feeling that he had a renewed lease of life and could once more face the bitter night, the policeman thanked the man for his kindness and said that he would start on his tour again. 'I'll just take a peep for you,' said the man in the linen duster as he unbolted the door, stepped into the street, looked up and down, and then stepped back and said that the coast was clear. 'I'm sorry I can't ask you to stop in for another warm-up when you think you need it,' said the man in the linen duster, 'but I leave here in a little while and the brother of the boss will watch the rest of the night, and he will not open the door for anybody.' The policeman said that he thought he would be all right for the balance of his tour, again thanked him, and walked away.

"The next morning that policeman was the most astonished officer in the city of New York. The old established jewelry store of Marcus & Blenheim, on his beat, had been robbed of several thousands of dollars in watches and jewelry, and there was not much in the way of clues to help the detectives in the case when they started in to investigate it. It was decided that the thief—it was not a burglary, for there was no forcible entrance—had gained admission to the store during the daytime and had concealed himself until the time came for him to get in his work. There was a real watchman, but he had been struck down from behind, bound and gagged and thrown into the cellar, where he was found half-dead the next morning, bleeding from the scalp wound that had laid him out and which laid him up for a month or more after.

"That's the story, Bill, and I hope you found it worth while listening to for the time it has taken me to tell it. What do you think about it, eh?"

"Why, it's a good story as stories go," said Bill, "but why should you bother to tell it to me?"

"Because, Bill, it has some very peculiar features about it that such a man as you, knowing police rules, would likely reflect about."

"What are you driving at?"

"Why, Bill, you would naturally assume that the young policeman did not tell what he knew about the matter because he had violated the rules of the department in entering that store to warm up, although he had really been forced to do so to keep himself from freezing to death. But he carried in his mind's eye a very excellent photograph of the burglar."

"Well, suppose he did?" was Bill's sarcastic rejoinder. "Why should that fact interest me?"

"Because the bare-headed man in the linen duster who walked around the store attending to such matters as would be looked after by a watchman during the long hours of the night, not only had a pockmarked face, but he also had what looked to be a scar about an inch and a quarter long and about three-eighths of an inch wide, running from under one eye to the side of his nose, and he also wore short, puffy side whiskers that matched his hair."

"Well, suppose he did, what then?" cunningly asked Bill.

"What then, you thief!" Marshall Gray ripped out, his eyes snapping. "Bill, you're forgetting that you're wearing the same disguise now that you wore the night you robbed Marcus & Blenheim!"

Bill's jaw fell, and he cast a swift glance towards the spot where the pistol had fallen, forgetting that Gray had kicked it out of the way before going on with his story.

"It's the greatest piece of luck that ever happened to me," frankly admitted the detective, "for without this knowledge I might have had great trouble in getting you to open your mouth. I'm the policeman you fooled that bitter night five years ago, and I could have shouted with joy when I stood on the stairs outside and peered through the window of the transom and saw you reveal yourself as the man who robbed Marcus & Blenheim by putting on the very same disguise that you wore that night. I had nothing on you, as you say, and did not know how I was going to make you talk unless I took you by the throat and told you I would kill you unless you spoke up, but now it's plain sailing. Where is the man with the broken leg?"

Bill scowled, shifted around uneasily in his chair, glared at the detective, but did not answer.

"Oh, very well," said Gray, getting up from his chair and drawing a pair of steel handcuffs from his pocket, "I can find out some other way, and it will be glory enough for me and a sweet revenge, too, to send you up the river for something like ten or fifteen years."

That was enough for Bill.

"All right," he said. "I'll talk."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MAN WITH THE BROKEN LEG

"GO right ahead, Bill," said the detective. "You know what I want, so reel out the information and don't make it necessary to gouge it out of you."

"Well," said Bill, "he's at the residence of a surgeon about half a mile or so from here. I brought the man from the dock and with the help of the chofe brought him up here and put him on that bed yonder. Then I sent the chofe for a doctor, telling him to say that he was wanted to attend to a man with a broken leg, and to come prepared to do the job. He fixed him up all right and made a clever job of it, and got the biggest kind of a fee for his work. Then he came once more, in the afternoon, to see if the patient was comfortable.

"I was the nurse, and the gent, who was evidently a swell guy, had shoved a brace of yellow boys in my mitt and told me there was plenty more to come if I locked out for him. He said he was on secret service for a large corporation, and was trying to get out of the city without being seen by those who were trying to break the company he represented, and a lot more of that sort of stuff that I swallowed to please him. It was no business of mine what he was, as long as he paid me well for what I was doing. But I had my own ideas about the gent all the same."

"What did you think, Bill?"

"I thought he was mixed up in something big and was dodging the 'bulls.'"

"Well, go on."

"When the surgeon came the second time, he said that everything was going along nicely, but when he called this morning he made a very careful examination and then said there must be a change in the patient's surroundings. There was danger of blood poisoning, he said, and he insisted that he must have the man where he could look after oftener. Then he suggested that the man be taken to a hospital where he was on the surgical staff and could look after him day and night if necessary. The gent wouldn't hear of the hospital. He said that he would pay the doctor very liberally to take him to the surgeon's own house and care for him there, giving him a long talk about not wanting to jeopardize the interests of the great corporation he was serving. He named exceedingly liberal terms for the service, and the doctor agreed to the proposition, but said that a room could not be prepared for him until the afternoon. About dusk the doctor came in a big automobile, and the two of us carried the patient downstairs and into the machine, and then from the machine we carried him into the doctor's house and put him on a bed."

"All of which accounts for your absence from the Helping Hand Mission last night," said Gray. "It is too bad that you have to deprive the congregation of the pleasure and profit of hearing that burning brand spiel of yours. It's a shame!"

Bill grinned, but said nothing.

"Now for the doctor's address," said Marshall Gray,

and Bill named one within half a mile of where they then sat.

"All right," said the detective, jotting down the address in his notebook. "And now tell me, who is the man with the broken leg?"

"If you threatened to put the bracelets on me I couldn't be sure. I asked him how he came to know me, and he said that his name was Forrest and that he had frequently attended the meetings of the Helping Hand Mission and heard me tell my story to the congregation, and that was how he came to call when he saw me on the South American dock. That's 'straight' goods."

The statement sounded so to the detective, and he made no comment on it, but drew from his pocket a small photograph of George Forrest that he had picked up from the dresser in the portrait painter's bedroom, when he made his call there with Dan Faversham.

"Ever see this man?" he asked, holding out the photograph so that Bill was able to get a full view of it.

"Sure," said Bill. "That's the man with the broken leg."

The detective got up from his seat.

"Now I've got another question to ask you," he said, fixing the sly-eyed rascal with a keen glance. "What was in that note that you carried for Forrest to the residence of Archibald Strain?"

"What note?" asked Bill, with the innocent face of a child.

The detective shot a threatening glance at him which made the fellow squirm on his chair.

"Be careful, for if you persist in lying I may change my mind and put the nippers on you after all."

"I tell you——"

Bill had got thus far with a protesting air that plainly indicated that he was going to deny knowledge of any note when the other broke in upon him in a very savage way:

"Oh, stow it! I know that you carried the note in question, and knowing what you are, it follows that I know that you would not fail to read it, and even go to the extent of making a copy. Here you had a man in your care that you describe as a swell guy, a man with lots of money who was trying hard to keep shady and that meant the possibility of blackmail."

Again Bill squirmed uneasily on his chair.

"See here," said Gray, "it will not wash. I know that you would never miss such a chance as that seemed to be to bleed a man. Show me the copy of the note."

Bill growled out something, but the detective made a motion as though to take out the handcuffs again, and the rascal got up, went over to the old dresser, and took out a folded piece of paper which he walked back with and silently gave to Gray. The latter opened it and read:

"Accident. Can't go. Perhaps delayed month or six weeks. All arrangements off until you hear from me again. Observe silence."

That was all; no address and no signature.

The detective gave the note back to Bill, who put it in the drawer again, a proceeding which made Marshall Gray smile knowingly.

"Well, old man," he said, "I'm going, and you need not tell me that you're glad to see me back, because I know it. However, let me say to you that you're gotten up in the disguise that you evidently use for your nights when you 'work,' and I have seen you in the rig, so if you 'work' to-night you may get into trouble."

With an angry growl Bill turned away to the dresser and began to remove the gray plaster and the puffy side-whiskers.

"Sorry to spoil a job, Bill," laughingly said the detective, and then he walked out of the room.

He went to the nearest telephone booth and called up the headquarters, learned from the officer on duty there the location of the place to which Faversham had been assigned, and then called the latter up.

"Our man is located," he said, "so come downtown and meet me as soon as possible because I want your help."

He appointed a time to meet Faversham outside the residence of the physician who had the injured man in his care, and half an hour later Dan met him there.

Briefly Marshall Gray went over the results of his work since he had parted with Faversham, and the latter grinned appreciatively at the recital.

"It seems that your theory is working out all right," he said.

"Now," said Gray, "there is not a doubt of it in my mind. It was only a theory up to the time when I cornered Brocky Bill Corse, but now it looks like something much stronger. I'll tell you what we'll do. I'll go in and have a talk with this doctor and come to an understanding. You stay out here and 'pipe' the premises, Dan, for we don't know what sort of a combination we're up against. And now that we've run our man down we don't want him sneaked away to another place."

"That's right," was Dan's comment.

"You see," went on Gray, "this doctor may be all right and he may be quite the other way, and mixed up thick in the business. We can't afford to take any chances on him."

So Dan Faversham took up his post outside, and Gray walked up the steps and rang the bell.

There was a little delay, as he naturally thought there would be at that hour, and then the door was opened by a man of middle age and professional aspect.

"Doctor Delatour?"

"Yes."

"Can you attend to me at this time of night?"

"Certainly," was the reply, and the doctor stepped aside to allow the supposed patient to enter.

Gray was conducted to an office at the rear of the hallway and invited to take a seat.

"Now, sir," said the doctor in a professional style, "please tell me what I can do for you."

With his usual promptness in such matters Gray had made his estimate of the man before him, and come to the conclusion that the doctor, so far as anything criminal was concerned, was all right. Therefore he did not beat about the bush for a moment.

"Why, doctor," he responded, his keen eyes fixed on the face of the surgeon, "you can tell me how the man with the broken leg is getting along?"

Doctor Delatour stared at him.

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"My name is Gray," was the answer, "and this will show you what I am."

And then the headquarters man threw back the lapel of his coat on the right side and displayed his shining shield to the other's gaze. "You look like an honest man, Doctor Delatour, and therefore I do not expect any trouble with you, but you are evidently not a fool, and you certainly must have guessed that man was, to say the least, a suspicious character."

"That is hardly fair," quickly responded the physician, who appeared hurt by the detective's assertion. "He told me a very plausible story about being the secret agent of a big corporation, and made me understand that it was of the highest importance that he should be kept entirely secluded until his leg mended and he was able to leave the city."

"Then it will surprise you to learn that he is nothing of the sort, but that he is a criminal of the worst description."

This made the doctor gasp for breath, and his eyes seemed ready to pop out of his head.

"You astonish me," he managed to articulate, although he was almost past the speaking stage. "But are you certain that I have the man you mean?"

For answer the detective drew forth the small photograph of George Forrest and held it up before the doctor's eyes. One glance was enough.

"That is the man without doubt," he said, with an unmistakable groan, and as he spoke he changed color. "Oh, what have I done?"

"Nothing, I think, to alarm you," soothingly said the detective. "You were promised big pay by a man who had a broken leg and who desired secrecy, and you simply ignored the possibility of there being anything crooked about it. I am willing to believe that that is the truth, doctor, but now I ask you to give me your aid and I will promise to see to it that your reputation does not suffer as a result of what we will call your indiscretion."

At these words an expression of the most intense relief passed over the face of the medical man.

"I am at your service," faintly said the unhappy physician.

"Good! Where is the man?"

"In a large chamber at the rear of the first floor above this which I had made ready for him."

"Asleep?"

"He is drugged asleep. He was suffering great pain, and I had to give him hypodermic injections of morphine."

"Then, as a matter of fact, it would be almost impossible to arouse him from his drugged sleep?"

"That is right."

"Will you let me have a look at him?"

"Certainly."

The physician at once arose from his seat and led the way up the stairs to the next floor.

To the rear of the hallway he conducted the detective and then into a large room at the end of it and said:

"There he is."

A half light flooded the room from a single electic bulb. On a bed in the center of the room lay a man who was breathing heavily. One leg was neatly done up in a splint and lay strapped to a padded board.

"Try to arouse him," suggested Gray, after a brief glance at the sleeper.

The doctor bent over the patient, shook him roughly several times and then bawled loudly right into the ear, but without result.

"I guess that there is no doubt about the condition that he is in, and if you will get me a bowl of hot water and a sponge I will do a little work on him while he is asleep."

Wonderingly, but without making any comment on the request that must have struck him as strange, the doctor at once departed on his errand, and as soon as he was gone the detective turned on two more lights and began a search of the room.

He soon found the thing he was looking for, a large satchel which was lying under the bed, and which Gray grinned at as he drew it forth. It was locked, but detectives suspect where keys to such things are carried, and unfastening the nightgown the sleeper wore he found the key attached to a cord that encircled the man's neck.

He removed it deftly, unlocked the satchel, and then the contents lay revealed to his gratified gaze.

"That settles it," he chuckled, and relocking the satchel he shoved it under the bed and restored the key to its former resting place a moment before the doctor came in with a bowl of hot water and a sponge. With a broad grin on his face Gray took them from the physician.

"Now watch," he said to the doctor, and in a moment the sponge was dipped into the hot water, withdrawn, squeezed out and then applied to the curling dark beard worn by the sleeper. Half a dozen times he did this, applying the sponge to different parts of the beard, and soon the hairs began to come away on the wet sponge, until, in the course of a few minutes the entire beard was soaked off, and the sleeper was revealed without any hair on his face.

The physician stepped forward and looked down on the sleeper, and was so deeply astonished by what he saw that he gasped for breath.

"Disguised!" he ejaculated.

"And you didn't suspect it?" asked Gray.

"No; the beard looked natural."

Evidently intensely interested, the physician bent over the sleeper and closely inspected his face. He noted several minute patches of what looked to be very pale skin adhering to the true skin, and these patches he examined with a glass that he drew from his pocket.

Then he straightened up and called the detective, requesting him to observe the minute patches.

"Particles of some sort of paste?" he asked.

"No," was the reply. "You are looking at little pieces of goldbeater's skin."

"I never heard of it."

The detective reflected a moment, and then turned his piercing gaze on the attentive medical man.

"Doctor, I want you to tell me just exactly what this man told you about himself when he solicited your aid."

"In addition to what I have already told you about that tale of being the secret agent of a corporation, I only learned that his name was George Forrest. He told me that I might read some talk in the newspapers about his having mysteriously disappeared from his home, but that I was to keep quiet about the matter and not permit myself to be carried away by any sensation of sympathy for his supposed distracted wife, as she well knew what he was doing. Whatever she might say would be for the purpose of misleading the vindictive and unscrupulous men who were fighting the great corporation he served as secret agent. He talked well and plausibly, and I had no reason to doubt his assertions in any degree."

"I can see that plainly, and I can also see that he is the shrewdest kind of a rascal. Now, tell me, doctor, if he has sent any message to anybody since he has been in your house?"

"He has not."

"Very well. Now, doctor, can you tell me how long this drugged sleep will last?"

The physician reflected a moment.

"Well, he certainly has a lot of drug in him, and I am inclined to think that he will sleep until ten or eleven tomorrow morning."

"All right. At what time do you start out in the morning to make your usual round of calls?"

"Ten o'clock."

"Does that colored boy remain here after you are gone to answer the doorbell and the telephone?"

"Yes."

"Will you instruct the colored boy that when some people come here in the neighborhood of eleven o'clock that he is to show them up to this room if they ask for Mr. Forrest?"

"Certainly."

Then the detective looked carefully around the room and saw that in the wall opposite the side of the bed there was a door partly screened by heavy portieres, and he at once pointed to it.

"Where does that door lead to, doctor?"

"To a spare bedroom which I am now using in order to be near my patient in the event of being required in the night."

"I understand. Doctor, can I make use of that other bedroom to-morrow morning after you go out?"

"I am in your hands, Mr. Gray."

"Which is a very sensible attitude on your part. Now we will go downstairs and I'll call in my side partner and have a talk with him about the arrangements for to-morrow morning. Your care of the patient will come to an end to-morrow morning, Doctor Delatour."

An undeniable expression of relief came over the face of the thoroughly frightened physician, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Never again!" he fervently said, and held up his right hand as though registering an oath.

Marshall Gray smiled.

"You are making a sensible resolve, doctor," he said. "I guess this affair will counsel you not to get mixed up in any mysterious business again. It pays best to keep to straight 'business.'"

The physician said nothing, but his face expressed whole volumes as he followed Gray out of the room.

Two minutes later Dan Faversham was in the house and was listening with rapt attention to the absorbing story that Gray had to tell him of what he had done since they parted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DOUBLE MYSTERY SOLVED

FAVERSHAM heard Gray to the end of the recital without a word, and then broke out impulsively:

"That's great!"

"I guess the story will startle even this lively town," modestly asserted the other. "The newspapers will certainly have a sensation to print this time."

"It beats everything in my experience," said Dan. "And have you made up your mind when to make the arrest?"

"Yes; to-morrow morning, and that brings me to the part that you've got to play in the matter. Did you sleep well last night?"

"A solid eight hours."

"Glad to hear it, for you'll have to share my watch with me to-night in the room on the first floor above."

"But you say he's drugged asleep?"

"Yes, he is, but I don't know what schemes he may have planned without the knowledge of the doctor, and I'm not going to risk anything after I have succeeded in bringing matters to this point."

"I don't blame you."

And so it was that with some light and interesting reading matter and a liberal supply of cigars to while away the time, the two detectives took up their station in the room where the drugged man was sleeping. They took turns in watching and sleeping after midnight, and kept their vigil until nine o'clock in the morning. Then Gray made bold to dip his powerful body in cold water in the bathroom that adjoined the room where he had watched, and when he came back to Dan he found that the doctor had sent up a tempting breakfast for two, and the meal was now being placed on a side table by the colored boy.

Marshall Gray ate a good breakfast, and then, leaving his trustworthy partner on guard he walked whistling out of the house and made his way briskly to the nearest telephone booth, and there called up several persons in rapid succession, smiling contentedly as he did so.

The chief of the detective bureau, the police captain who had precinct charge of the Chelsea Bank affair, then the coroner, and finally the cashier of the plundered bank were summoned on the wire.

There was a telegraph office in the same place, and after thinking long and earnestly over the wording of it, Marshall Gray sent a telegram. Then, singing a popular song, and evidently in a very happy frame of mind, he left the place and strode away, seeming to be walking on air and mentally visualizing a complexion of milk and blood, a pair of swimming sapphire eyes and a most perfectly rounded and alluring figure.

Back to the doctor's house he went and was admitted by the colored boy on duty there. Gray questioned the lad and found out that he had been clearly instructed about admitting persons who might call after the doctor went out and who asked for Mr. Forrest.

At ten o'clock the doctor's automobile came to the door, and then, carrying an instrument case, the physician came into the bedroom and took a look at the sleeping man.

"How about him?" asked the detective.

"He is stirring in his sleep, and will probably awake within the next ten or fifteen minutes," was the reply. "For some little time he will be half-awake and half-asleep, the result of the drug, you understand."

"Exactly. Then he will gradually clear up?"

"Yes."

"How long will that take, doctor?"

"Ten or fifteen minutes after he wakes up he will be in his normal mental condition, of that you may be sure."

"That will suit me," said Gray. "Well, doctor, you've acted on the square, so you can go on about your business with an easy mind."

It was only a few minutes past the hour of eleven when the front doorbell rang and the colored boy promptly opened the door.

Reginald Strain and a middle-aged woman stood there.

"This is Doctor Delatour's office?" asked poung Strain.

"Yes, sir."

"We were told to say that we received a telegram, and to say that we wanted to see Mr. Forrest to the boy who opened the door. Is that clear to you?"

"That's right, sir. Please come in."

Through the open doorway of the rear bedroom on the first floor above Gray could clearly hear the conversation, and he smiled appreciatively and softly murmured:

"Will you walk into my parlor?" said the spider to the fly.

"Please follow me," he heard the colored boy say, and then he heard Reginald Strain say:

"Come along, mother," and this was followed by the sounds of footsteps ascending the stairs.

An instant later the three persons had arrived outside the door of the room in which the criminal lay, and then the colored boy was heard to say:

"Walk right in through that open doorway."

Straight into the room walked Mrs. Strain and her son, and just as they made their way over the threshold the man with the broken leg turned his face towards them fully.

Two impulsive cries burst forth:

"Archibald!"

"Father!"

"Hush!" said the injured man, but at that instant the heavy portieres which screened the next room were thrown aside, and Marshall Gray strode into the room, followed by the chief of the detective bureau, the captain of police who had precinct charge of the Chelsea Bank affair, the cashier of the bank, Dan Faversham and the coroner.

Marshall Gray, a smile of triumph on his face, strode across the room with swift steps, reached the side of the bed and laid one hand on the shoulder of the man with the broken leg, saying:

"Archibald Strain, you are my prisoner!"

Mrs. Strain uttered a loud shriek and fell unconscious into the arms of her son, who also looked ready to collapse.

The man in the bed put one hand inquiringly to his face and passed his fingers over his cheeks and chin. The detective laughed out at him.

"It's no use feeling for the beard, Strain," he said, unable to resist a couple of chuckles, "for I removed that last night while you were sleeping from the effects of the morphine which had been put under your skin."

The other glared up at him.

"What am I arrested for?" he asked.

"For the murder of the watchmen of the Chelsea Bank; for the theft of something like a quarter of a million from that institution, and also for the murder of George Forrest."

The exposed criminal was silent for a moment, and then looked up at his captor with something like admiration in his eyes.

"How did you find it out?" he asked.

Marshall Gray shot a keen glance at him.

"What does that matter?" he asked in turn.

"Well, because I thought——"

And then he came to a pause. Gray looked searchingly at him and read the man's thoughts with a natural intuition sharpened by experience. He knew that brainy criminals had a morbid pride in the perfection of their schemes, and he was not slow to realize that this man was piqued over the failure of what he had doubtless considered a very perfect plan.

"I'll tell you what is in your mind," said Gray, while the officers and Upton stood looking on interestedly. "You imagined that your whole scheme was thought out to perfection, down to the most minute detail, and that there could be no slip about it, and even when the queer incident of rats deserting a ship that their instinct probably warned them was doomed to sink, you thought it would only result in a broken leg and a temporary delay for you. And no doubt you prided yourself on the general character of your plans and reasoned it out that with plenty of money to help you, a beard to disguise you and a clever story about your connection with a great corporation, that the delay would be limited to the time when

you could be removed to a vessel bound for South America. And now you feel put out about it, and you are wondering where the weak link in the chain was. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are."

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes," was the eager response.

The eagerness of the answer made Gray smile.

"Well," he said, studying the crestfallen man in the bed and realizing how very keenly he desired the information, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make a bargain with you, Strain. Tell me who George Forrest really was, and I'll tell you what you want to know."

Gray was looking intently at Strain as he made the proposition, and he was startled to note the storm of evil passions that swept over it as the banker considered the offer.

An instant later Strain spoke up:

"He was my twin brother, and I hated him with all the force of my nature. In all my life I never loved but one woman, and he won her from me and made her his wife. For that I planned a deep-laid scheme against him and was able to convince our father that George was guilty of theft, and for that he was not only driven from the house, but disinherited."

Marshall Gray heard a gasping sound behind him, and turned his eyes on Mrs. Strain, who was coming back to consciousness.

"We have no further use for either you or your mother at the present time, Reginald Strain," he said, "so you had better take your mother home. We can always get you if we need you later on."

Without a word young Strain lifted his mother up from the floor and bore her out of the room, evidently not relishing so much official company.

"Now, Archibald Strain," said Gray, "I will keep my word with you. Clever and deep and brainy schemer that you are, you will probably gnash your teeth when I tell you that the very first thing that put me wise to the fact that there was something not consistent in the appearance of matters in your library was when I examined the murdered man and found out that he had on a suit of clothes that could not have been made for less than seventy-five dollars, and yet wore cheap, cotton underwear!"

A low but audible curse escaped the banker's lips.

"That started it," said Gray, "and made me suspicious. From that moment I had to regard every bit of seeming evidence with suspicion, and little by little the conviction grew on me that the whole scene, as it was laid out in the library for the police to read, was nothing but a 'plant.'

"Then, too, you forgot to brush off the hairs from the clothing you put on George when you shaved off his beard to bring back his resemblance to yourself, and so have him identified as Archibald Strain while you were escaping to South America with a quarter of a million stolen from your own bank, and traveling there as George Forrest. Moreover, you were going to open the door of that old-fashioned safe with a key, and then changed your mind and used a 'jimmy' to make it look like a crackman's work, and in your excitement, for you certainly must have been excited to commit all these blunders, you dropped the key when you probably thought you were putting it in your pocket."

An exclamation escaped the banker.

"Then, too," went on Gray, "you failed to throw away the recently used mug and brush with which you had shaved your victim, and were stupid enough to put them in a wall cabinet where I came upon them after the other matters had aroused my suspicions.

"But the great help to me, as fate would have it after your bungling had made me suspicious, was that when I went to headquarters to report to the chief, he had just heard from Mrs. Forrest about the mysterious absence of her steady-going husband. That led to the declaration on the part of my friend and side partner, Dan Faversham, when he had been assigned to the case, that he had met Forrest that morning on the dock of the South American line, and was sure of his man because he became personally acquainted with Forrest when the latter painted the portraits of Faversham's parents a long time before, and that led to Faversham visiting the weeping wife in the chief's auto and my going along with him to clear my head with a long, swift ride. At the Forrest home I saw a portrait of the painter and was struck by a certain amount of resemblance between the face I was looking at and my recollection of the face of the banker that I had scanned while at work in the library of the Strain mansion only a short time before, and when I put my hand over the lower portion of the portrait and shut out the beard I decided that the upper half of the face was just as much like Archibald Strain as it was like George Forrest, and then the idea flashed through my mind that Forrest was related to you, perhaps closely, and that you had lured him to your home, had murdered him, shaved him, and had left him sitting dead in your favorite chair to be identified as yourself, while you made your way downtown, entered your bank, murdered the watchman, looted the vault, rang up the hours for the benefit of the burglary insurance concern, and then, a little before seven o'clock, with the beard made in imitation of the one worn by George Forrest gummed safely to your face, left the bank with your plunder, probably made a meal in a nearby restaurant, and then walked over to the South American dock, where you were seen and recognized by Faversham as George Forrest.

"All this was strengthened by the fact that Mrs. Forrest knew absolutely nothing about the history of her husband prior to her marriage with him except that he had been married before, while her account of his daily life made me sure that he was a good man who lived a domestic life, caring only for his wife, his art, and flowers and perfumes. The latter taste, a love of rare and exquisite perfumes, also led to another important point of discovery. The heavy paper-weight with which you struck George, and which you took from Miss Delgarde's room with evil intent, furnished testimony against you.

"An exquisite perfume, which was new to me, clung to the heavy paper-weight and I inhaled the peculiar odor until I felt sure that I could recognize it if I ever encountered it again. Naturally, when Mrs. Forrest spoke about her husband's use of pomade that was scented with a rare Arabian perfume, I was intensely interested. In Forrest's bedroom there was a jar of this rarely perfumed pomade which he used on his hair, and one whiff of it was enough to convince me that it was identical with the perfume on the hair of the dead man in your library. I got a sample of it, too.

"With my theory assured, it only remained to find Brocky Bill Corse, who had been recognized by you when he strayed onto the South American dock at the time that you broke your leg and needed immediate help to get you away from a dangerous situation. You knew Bill because you had seen him many times at the mission you endowed and supported as a cloak for your immoral life, but Bill, of course, didn't recognize you, although I can inform you that he is still holding on to the copy of the note he carried to your wife, thinking it may prove of value to him.

"That note, too, served to make me suspect that all was not as it seemed in your house, for your son was so excited that he read part of it aloud to his mother before she warningly stopped him, and the whole thing was narrated to me by the policeman on duty outside the library door.

Then the detective turned to the coroner.

"Mr. Coroner, are you satisfied that I have the right man, the man who murdered the party found dead in Archibald Strain's library?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Then, sir, as Hortense Delgarde, the young French teacher, was committed to the Tombs by you, and as I feel an interest in the girl, I beg that you will go up there without delay and order her release."

"It shall be done at once," said the coroner.

"There was something that convinced me that you had premeditated flight for some time, Strain," Gray said, turn-

ing to the criminal in bed, "the fact that you had been taking lessons in foreign languages for many months past. It will probably add to your discomfort to know that the young lady who taught you, and whom you tried to fasten the murder on because she had spurned your infamous advance, will probably become my wife!"

Strain glared at him in wonder, while the chief indulged in a series of loud chuckles.

Away to the Tombs in the coroner's automobile Marshall Gray was whirled at a lively pace, and within half an hour the French girl was set free, and in the office of the warden put her hands trustfully in those of the triumphant detective and said:

"You are, indeed, a friend, and with all my heart I thank you."

"But, Hortense, I want to be more than a friend, and I think if you were to see a great deal of me day after day, you might learn to regard me with a warmer sentiment. Tell me, sweetest girl, where are you going from here?"

"To find a boarding-house until I can obtain another position as teacher."

"Ah, then you have no regular home?"

"No, for sometimes I may be employed for many months as instructress in languages, and occasionally for as long as a year."

"Then," eagerly said Marshall Gray, "I ask you to come to my home, where my dear old mother, a sweet and lovely person who thinks the sun rises and sets for the sole benefit of her son, will welcome you with open arms when I tell her that I love you dearly and hope to win you for a wife. Come for a very well-earned rest and a chance to form a thorough estimate of me by close contact day by day, and when a month has passed I will ask you what you think of me. Speak up. Shall it be as I say?"

"Yes," she whispered, raising her eyes to his, and he was blind not to have read correctly the expression in their sapphire depths.

So home to his sweet old mother Marshall Gray took the lovely French girl who had taken his heart by storm, and Hortense Delgarde met with such a reception and welcome as gladdened her heart and brought tears of joy to her eyes.

And that night, with his doting mother and the admiring Hortense composing an audience that hung breathlessly on every word, Gray retold the story that he had that morning told to Archibald Strain.

There followed many more evenings in her company when he was not on duty, and Gray found that he was getting deeper in love with the passing of the days.

Two weeks passed by, and then he came to her one evening and said:

"I have news for you, Hortense."

"About my brother?" she gasped.

"Oh, no. I am sure he is safe, and I trust that he has learned his lesson and will lead a different life. The news I have for you is that Archibald Strain has cheated the electric chair."

"Dead? A suicide?"

"Dead, but not a suicide. Blood poisoning set in from the injury to his leg, and he died this afternoon."

"Well, he was a wicked man, but still I feel sorry for him."

"Why, Hortense, you must be an angel to feel anything but repugnance at the mere mention of his name after his course towards you."

"Marshall, I shall always feel something like a sense of gratitude whenever I hear his name mentioned or whenever I recall him."

"You astonish me. What did he ever do that you should feel grateful to him for, I would like to know?"

"He made me acquainted with you," was the reply, and although Hortense cast down her glorious eyes as she made the admission, the rich color swept in a crimsoning wave over her neck and face, and something like a light began to dawn in the mind of the headquarters man.

"Hortense!" he cried, "Do you mean—do you——"

Then she looked up at him, and what he read in the sapphire eyes swept away the last scintilla of doubt from his mind, and he caught her in his arms and again and again kissed her on her willingly yielded lips.

"Since when, Hortense, since when?" he demanded when she laughingly told him to let her get her breath.

"Since when, Marshall? Since the hour when you poured forth your declaration of love in such terms as assured me that they came from your very heart; that you were sincere; that you loved a woman for the first time! Oh, Marshall, I felt that I had awakened a love worth having, and when you left me in that prison cell you carried my heart away with you. And now, if you will promise to leave enough breath in my body to serve the purpose of respiration, you may kiss me again."

Our next issue will contain an interesting detective story by Charles Fulton Oursler, entitled "The Magician Detective."

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Crittenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Chas. F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, By Edith Sessions Tupper

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COUSINS

By ROBERT H. F. WHITE

HAD Merle Dunton been a very rich man he would undoubtedly have been a generous philanthropist. As it was, he carried his philanthropical inclinations further than he should, considering his modest financial means. For Dunton was not a rich man in the ordinary acceptation of that term. Every one knew or knew of Dunton, the famous detective story writer, known far and wide among readers of the magazines as the inventor of the most clever and original plots imaginable for his great detective Burdock to solve. He delighted in concocting ingeniously involved criminal puzzles to baffle his fictional detective creation, and then turning right around, mentally mentally speaking, and helping the detective to unravel them. On the strength of his success as a writer, it naturally followed that he was the recipient from time to time of all sorts of communications from literary aspirants and others seeking advice and encouragement. Having had no easy time himself, at first, he was invariably touched by these appeals for assistance and cheerfully rendered what help he could. So charitably disposed in this respect was he, that he was obliged to neglect his own work in order to do justice to the many manuscripts that were submitted to him for criticism by struggling young authors. One of the oddest letters he received read:

He reached over and with one hand lifted the red wig from off Bertol's head.

"I am a reader of your intensely interesting detective stories and enjoy them greatly. I am a writer myself; that is, I am devoting my spare time to writing now, and am perfectly satisfied with my knowledge of English. If that were all it would be simple, but my difficulty is plots. I wonder if you could help me, Mr. Dunton. If you can consistently do so, I should like you to furnish me with a plot for a story. A good strong plot, such as you write yourself. I have one of them in mind myself, because I am somewhat familiar with the subject. It is the express business. I worked in an express office once. I thought that if a big robbery from an express company could be developed satisfactorily it would be something out of the ordinary. I shall be glad to pay you for your services if you care to help me.

"Fraternally yours,

"H. C. BERTOL."

The letter was written in manuscript. This was such an unusual request that Dunton laughed outright.

"The silly ass!" was his mental comment on the author of the letter. "What he wants is a collaborator apparently."

He concluded, however, to humor the fellow, and forthwith rooted into his mental store of plots, and yanked forth one of the many, many gripping plots which he had from time to time deposited therein for future reference and use. He at once despatched the skeleton plot to the presumptuous young author, and suggested, as a further evidence of his generous disposition, that the completed manuscript be submitted to him when ready in order that he might pass upon it. In due course of time he received the typewritten story, with a note also typewritten, even to the name. Bertol had used his plot *in toto*. Dunton read his treatment of it with interest. It was not a masterpiece, by any means, as handled by Bertol, but it was interesting reading, notwithstanding, perhaps because the plot was a strong one. It was a detective mystery story such as Dunton himself wrote, and at the end the culprit in it was caught and punished. Just after Dunton had posted the story back to Bertol the evening newspaper came in. One of the first things that arrested his eye was this: "Embezzles $25,000." It proved to be the usual story of misplaced confidence reposed in a trusted employee who could not resist the temptation, and embezzled that amount of money from the Interocean Express Company. The strange part of the story, however, was the coincidental name of the embezzler with the name of the offender in the story written by Dun-

ton's correspondent, Bertol—Lumford, James Lumford. "That's singular," thought Dunton, and to emphasize the singularity of the thing, on reading the article he discovered that the way in which Lumford in the newspaper story secured the money and decamped was identical with the way in which the fictitious Lumford—the Lumford in Bertol's manuscript—secured the money. In short, the story in the newspaper was on all fours with that written by Bertol.

Dunton set about looking into the matter a little curiously, in the belief that it was more than mere coincidence. Bertol had given a post-office box number. That was all the clue Dunton had to the identity of the man. He went to the express office from which the Lumford in real life had embezzled the money; but little was to be learned there at first, however, since the heads of the office were not inclined to much communicativeness, except to the police. Thoughtfully Dunton had taken with him Bertol's first letter. By dint of perseverance he succeeded in securing an interview with the manager, who at first was disposed to dismiss the author summarily when he learned what he was after.

"But hold on, Mr. Holden," said Dunton impressively. "I may be in position to help you in your embezzlement case. Do you recognize that handwriting?"

He had taken Bertol's letter from his pocket and placed it on the desk before the manager. Mr. Holden scrutinized it with a displeased look on his face. He did not want to be bothered with this interloper, evidently some private detective crank working out some pet theory. He had his work to do. He felt like telling the fellow to go about his business.

"I don't see anything familiar looking in that writing," he decided with irascible quickness, throwing rather than handing the letter back to Dunton and abruptly turning around to his desk by way of a curt dismissal.

"Wait a minute," advised Dunton. "I have a more than curious interest in this case. It is personal. You see, I am a detective——"

"Don't care if you are a detective," snapped Holden. "The chief of police has the matter in hand, and we also have our private men working on the case. I have given them all the information I possess. My time is too valuable to be pestered with detectives running in here every minute in the day. Did the chief send you?"

"No, but——"

"That ends it so far as I'm concerned, Mr. Dutton." He glanced at the author grouchily.

"Dunton," corrected the latter. "Merle Dunton," and he produced his card and laid it before the manager.

The name had a talismanic effect. Holden's face smoothed out beautifully in an instant and a look of curiosity mingled with skepticism appeared thereon. "Not the story writer, I hope?" He was almost sarcastic at the suggestion.

"The same," smiled Dunton hopefully. "I——"

"Put it there, Mr. Dunton, and pray pardon my rudeness and irritability," smiled the manager, stretching forth his hand. "I'm a very busy man, you see, and I'm always naturally impatient of unnecessary interruptions; but I'm a pretty decent sort at heart, and when it comes to meeting my favorite author, well, I simply have to make an exception."

His smile did not belie his words. Reassured, Dunton shook his hand.

"You have given me more pleasure in life," went on the manager, his pressing business now forgotten in the presence of a literary celebrity, "with your stunning detective stories than anything I know of. I thought you said you were a detective a moment ago?"

"You interrupted me, Mr. Holden," explained Dunton, smiling at the recollection of the other's crabbiness. "I was about to say I was a detective story writer."

"Looking for a plot," smiled Holden good-naturedly. "So that's how you get your ideas for stories, is it?"

"Not exactly," said Dunton. "But listen." Then he told the manager his story.

"How curious!" observed Holden when he had finished. "Let me see that letter again, please."

The manager was all business now.

"No"—he shook his head after a close examination of the letter—"I do not recognize that writing. It must be simply a coincidence. In order, however, to be sure, let's go back to the books and compare the two hands."

Dunton followed the manager to the rear of the office. Holden opened up some books which were now in charge of some expert accountants going over the missing embezzler's accounts. He placed the letter in juxtaposition with the handwriting in the various books, but they were as unlike as any two manuscripts could well be.

"It strikes me," said Dunton, "that the writing in this letter is that of a woman."

"I think so, too," said Holden; "and I shouldn't wonder but what it is."

Dunton shrugged his shoulders.

When the author returned to his home that morning he found a red-headed, red-mustached young man waiting for him.

"Mr. Dunton, my name's Bertol," introduced the stranger. "You——"

"Bertol!" exclaimed Dunton. "I should think you would be afraid to come here."

"I know what you're thinking of," smiled the man, "but you're wrong. I received your plot all right, and wrote the story, which no doubt you received."

"Yes, I received it and mailed it back to you last evening," said Dunton. "Do you know this man Lumford who robbed the express company?"

"No, I do not, and that's why I came here to tell you that the identity of the name in my story with the name of the man who absconded with the express company's money is simply a coincidence."

Dunton looked hard at Bertol.

"How did you happen to hit upon that name?" he asked.

"I got it out of the telephone directory."

"Look here," said Dunton suddenly, pulling from his pocket Bertol's letter, "did you write this?"

Bertol looked at the letter.

"That's not my handwriting," he said.

"Your name is signed to it."

Bertol read the letter in astonishment.

"I wrote such a letter," he said; "but this is not my handwriting. Think it is an exact reproduction, however, of the letter I wrote you, if I remember exactly."

It was Dunton's turn to be astonished.

"I wonder who could have copied my first letter and sent it to you, and why did he or she do it?" mused Bertol.

"Do you live with your folks?" asked Dunton.

"No, I board and lodge with a Mrs. Stubbins—been there a month."

"And there are others who live there?"

"Yes, at least half a dozen."

"I'll go out to your place with you, if you don't mind," announced Dunton.

"All right," acquiesced Bertol.

The morning was pretty well advanced when they reached Bertol's lodging-place. On the front porch a woman was scrubbing the steps.

"Good-morning," said Bertol cheerfully to her as he and Dunton ascended the steps.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bertol," greeted the woman, stopping her work.

"How's Gladys these days?" asked Bertol. "I've not seen her for some time."

"Oh, Gladys! Gladys!" sighed the woman, shaking her head sadly. "That girl has broken my heart, Mr. Bertol, that's what she has."

"Oh, I hope it isn't as bad as that," he said.

"She's run away and married some man," continued the woman. "I only met him once. I only hope he's all right. I don't see why they should want to run away, though. I was not against her marrying any one she wanted to."

"Don't take it so hard," said Bertol sympathetically. "Every girl, you know, wants to get married."

"It's not that, Mr. Bertol," said the woman. "It's the cruel way in which she left me, without scarcely a word, except this." She searched in her pocket and brought forth a crumpled note:

"I'm going to marry Mr. Lumford," it read. "We love each other. I'll be back soon, maybe. Ta-ta!

"YOUR DAUGHTER GLADYS."

Bertol was so astonished at what he read he could not speak for a moment.

"Read that, Mr. Dunton," he said at length. Dunton read, and, of course, he too was astonished.

"When did they elope?" he asked.

"Day before yesterday," said the woman. "I don't even know he can support her."

"Too bad," he said to the woman as he handed back the note, first, however, having compared the writing with that in Bertol's letter. "Do you know where this Lumford works?"

"No, I don't," said she, choking back a sob.

Later that day Dunton went to see Mr. Holden again. He told him what he had learned.

"Lumford is the cousin of a vice-president of the company," said the manager. "Look at this!"

He held out a long day message, the substance of which was that Mr. Holden was roundly criticized for his conduct in making the embezzlement public so quickly.

"I just followed our regular custom," explained Holden. "Whenever an employee absconds with money of the company it is made public at once, and the police are notified, and we wire the home office at the same time. I did so in this instance, but it seems I got in bad. Shouldn't wonder but what I'll lose my job as manager in consequence. As a matter of fact, I didn't know Lumford was related to the vice-president until I received this message. He came to us highly recommended, I remember. That's why he was engaged."

The message wound up with: "Call off the police at once. I'll make good the loss personally."

"H'm!" mused Dunton. "To save the family name, eh?"

Scarcely had he reached home than he received a call from Bertol.

"Mrs. Cranston, the mother of Gladys, has just heard from her daughter," he announced breathlessly. "They're coming home as fast as they can."

"Coming home?" echoed Dunton in astonishment. "That chap certainly has a nerve. Suppose he has heard from his forgiving cousin, though, and that the matter will be straightened out satisfactorily and hushed up."

Then he told Bertol of what he had picked up at the express office. The following day Dunton and Bertol dropped in to see Mr. Holden.

"The vice-president is on his way here," was the first bit of information he received from the manager, and Dunton acquainted the latter with the information that Lumford was on his way home. The manager's eyes opened wide.

"I wouldn't want to be in his shoes when his cousin finds him," was his observation. "Jamison ought to be here at five o'clock."

"I'll stick around, then," decided Dunton.

A few minutes after five an automobile drew up to the curbing and out stepped a fashionably-dressed, youngish-looking man.

"Holden, you're a crass idiot!" he exploded on entering the office and addressing the manager. Then observing Dunton and Bertol standing there, he stopped abruptly and engaged the manager in a conversation in a low tone.

As he did so another machine drove up to the curbing and a young man, dressed in a neat business-suit, with a business-like carriage, alighted therefrom, and at once entered the express office.

"Where's Mr. Holden?" he asked, his face pale, but a determined look thereon. He held in his hand a newspaper. Dunton's quick eye caught a heading reporting the embezzlement.

"There he is," informed the assistant manager, a Mr. Snyder. "Your cousin, the vice-president, has just come in, Mr. Lumford. He's talking with Mr. Holden."

"My cousin!" repeated Lumford loudly, for it was he. "Vice-president! I have no cousin vice-president of anything. What do you mean?"

Snyder looked bewildered, as indeed he was. Dunton overheard the conversation and stood still, an enigmatical smile on his face. Jamison also caught the remark.

"What's that?" the vice-president asked sharply, turning around.

"Lumford says he's not your cousin," imparted Snyder.

"Lumford, my cousin!" repeated Jamison. "What in thunder is the matter with you all here, anyway?"

"Lumford is the man who embezzled the money," put in Holden, amazed at seeing the man standing before him. "He——"

"He is, is he?" cried Jamison.

"You lie!" exclaimed Lumford hotly. "Who published this?" he demanded, pointing to the story in the newspaper.

"A great mistake has been made apparently," said Jamison, completely ignoring Lumford and his wrath. "You wired me that my cousin had embezzled $25,000. It seems that he did nothing of the sort, and that this man is the real culprit." He pointed to Lumford.

"You lie!" roared Lumford again.

"That will do, Lumford!" waved Jamison, with remarkable self-poise. "How did you come to make such a blunder, Mr. Holden?"

"I made no blunder that I know of," said Holden. "I wired you that the assistant cashier had absconded with $25,000 of the company's money. Mr. Bailey, the cashier, has been ill for several days, and Mr. Lumford had been holding down his place as well as his own."

"Here's your wire, Mr. Holden," said the vice-president, pulling out a telegram, which read:

"Cashier absconded with $25,000 of company's money. Police notified."

"Blame that new stenographer!" cried Holden. "It's her mistake. Miss Boygan, please come here."

A young lady approached from her machine, with notebook in hand.

"Please turn to your notes of yesterday and read me the telegram to Mr. Jamison which I gave you," instructed the manager.

Miss Boygan did as she was instructed, and, finding the notes, read the name and address, and then:

"Assistant cashier absconded——"

"There!" cried the manager triumphantly. "Now get me the copy of the telegram."

The girl produced the copy. It read the same as the telegram received by Mr. Jamison.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't get efficient stenographic help around here, then," said the vice-president, regarding the young lady wrathfully. "That mistake has cost me the loss of several days for nothing. Now if you're sure of Lumford's guilt, have him arrested at once."

Dunton stepped forward.

"I learned to-day, if you'll pardon me, Mr. Jamison," he said, "that Mr. Bailey, the cashier, left town over a week ago, ostensibly for his health; in reality to escape punishment for his embezzlement, as you will find by an examination of the books. Mr. Lumford is innocent."

"You're a liar!" cried Jamison, turning fiercely on Dunton. "Who are you, and who asked you for your advice?"

The author shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"The accountants on the books will tell you the truth," was all he said, addressing his remarks to the manager. "The embezzlement took place before Lumford assumed charge of the cashier's books. The handwriting is Bailey's. Furthermore, I learned that he has had considerable money to his credit on deposit in the various banks far beyond what he could save from his salary."

"That's the truth, Mr. Jamison," corroborated the manager. "I learned that this morning myself from the accountants. Mr. Bailey has been gone a week." He reached over to a pigeon-hole in his desk. "A few days after he left a messenger left this letter for you, Mr. Jamison," the manager added, handing the vice-president the letter which he had taken from his desk.

With trembling hands Jamison tore open the envelope. He would have kept the contents of it entirely to himself, but Dunton noiselessly stepped behind him. Here's what he read:

"DEAR COUSIN—When you get this you will doubtless have heard of my dishonesty (?). Yes, I took the $25,000, and *you* know why. I'd advise you not to let anybody else read this letter, though, for I stole what was rightfully mine—the $25,000 you stole from me before I came of age by pretending that I was dead. You know! I had no proofs to advance when I learned of your treachery, but now I have, and have placed them in my lawyer's hands for proper action if you take any against me. The only reason I have not said anything before is on account of your wife, whom you also stole from me when you knew I loved her. I'm off to France to fight as a volunteer for America. Can you say the same thing for yourself? Twenty thousand of the money I took I have invested in Liberty bonds. The other $5,000 I have contributed to the Red Cross fund.

"Very truly yours,

"OSWALD BAILEY."

The letter was typewritten, so that Dunton had little difficulty in reading it.

"This is a personal matter," announced the vice-president, turning pale as he folded the letter and thrust it into his pocket. "I guess we had better drop the matter," he concluded. His face had assumed a worried look.

"Not so fast, there!" cried Lumford. "I've been scandalously libeled!"

"We'll pay you a reasonable amount for the mistake," the vice-president hastened to say, "and publish in the newspapers full retraction of the charge. How will a thousand dollars do?"

"I'll take it," Lumford agreed, after a few moments' reflection," with the understanding that I have a month's vacation with full pay, and the retention of my position."

"That'll be all right," decided Jamison quickly, as he walked outside, trying to assume a dignified mien.

Lumford's wife came in at that moment.

"There's one more link or so to clear up in this mystery," whispered Dunton to Bertol as he walked over to the former Gladys Cranston, now Mrs. Lumford, "and I'm going to clear it up now."

"Mrs. Lumford," he commenced, "your husband is cleared of the absurd charge against him, as he will in due time, no doubt, explain to you in full. There is one thing, however, that's puzzling me, and that is, how did you come to write that letter to me? You see, I'm Mr. Dunton, the detective story writer."

He pulled out of his pocket the letter in the strange handwriting signed in Bertol's name. She was about to deny any knowledge of it, but her husband interposed.

"Tell him the truth," said he.

"I went to see my mother at Mrs. Stubbins'," said the girl, for she was no more than eighteen, "one day about two weeks ago, and found her in Mr. Bertol's room cleaning up. On his table there was a letter signed by him. I was fingering it absently while I talked with mother, when all of a sudden it slipped from my fingers and dropped into the pail of water which she was using. Of course, the letter was spoiled. Mother suggested that I rewrite the letter, which I did on the same kind of paper which I found on the table, and I suppose it was then mailed to you by Mr. Bertol himself. Having read the letter, I learned the contents and was naturally curious about his story, so on another occasion when I was in his room I found the manuscript in his desk and read it. I had suggested the name Lumford to Mr. Bertol when he asked me one day for a name, not dreaming of what his story was going to be. The plot of the story being laid in an express office interested me because, you see, my husband—although he was not that then—worked in an express office and he had the same name. I had pretended to Mr. Bertol that I got the name out of the telephone directory. I was so amused when I read the story that I took the manuscript down to the office for him to read, and we both had a big laugh over it. I returned it secretly that night to Mr. Bertol's room. That's all."

"The only link in the chain now unaccounted for," said Duncan, "is the similarity of the facts in your story with those of the actual robbery—eh, Mr. Bailey—er—Bertol?" He reached over, and with one hand lifted the red wig from off Bertol's head. With the other hand he yanked off the red mustache. "It's old, but it works sometimes even yet," he added, referring to the disguise.

"Bailey!" cried Holden and Snyder in one voice of amazement, looking anxiously outside where Jamison had entered his car, which now moved off. Lumford and his wife were the picture of astonishment.

"I'll be more careful the next time how I circulate my plots outside of the magazines. However, Bertol—er—Bailey, you now have a plot from real life. That is the better of the two, by far. When are you off for France?"

"To-morrow," said Bailey.

"There is one thing puzzling me," said Dunton. "Why did you come to see me at all?"

"Well, I could not see Lumford sent up for a crime which I committed. I stayed to save him. As it turned out, it was not necessary to reveal myself voluntarily."

He smiled as he started for the door.

Read the story, "The Passage Invisible," by C. T. Jordan, out in our next number.

IN SLEEPY HOLLOW

By ROBERT H. DAVIS

THERE was tumult in Alex Bunner's. The men had been laid off at the mines, and the prospectors had come in from the placer flats and gulches to scatter their gold dust on the gaming tables, and exhaust their passion for draw poker and "stimilints."

Bill Coe had just entered with some friends that he had gathered up on the wayside. The stuffy barroom was heavy with the fumes of tobacco smoke, strong drink, and the odor of new overalls.

"Look here, Alex!" exclaimed Coe; "I'm no desperado, and what's more, I ain't looking fer none! But these here gents, Alex, is friends o' mine, and I'm tellin' yer to set 'em up pretty plentiful, and what's more, Alex, I want yer to shoot things around lively until they quits clamorin'. Old Coe's sorter joyful anyhow this here date. Name yer 'lixir, gents."

Alex, without hesitation and plenty of provocation, slid two bottles of powerful whisky along the pine board which had served as a bar for many a long day, and with a flourish of his hand, dumped a score of dirty glasses before Coe's guests. The liquor was tossed off without water, and in less time than is consumed at a civilized bar the whole crowd was ready to try it again.

Coe smashed the bar a resounding blow with his calloused fist, and demanded another dose of "stimilints." "Shorely to Gawd, Alex, yer don't think us gents is overly appeased at this here game?"

Just then Bob Judd edged over toward Coe, and clapping hands with him, asked in a low voice:

"What's this surplus jug play on, Bill? Yer must o' struck so'thin' 'zorbitant in that cave o' yourn."

"Which un?"

"The Cripple Horse. I reckon yer givin' the people more credit, Bill, than to get absorbed in the supposition that they ain't calkerlated just why yer buncoed them two Connecticut gents off o' that there claim."

"Those two mud hens wasn't fit company fer us people, nohow. I figered out that some leading citizen, like Bill Coe, fer instance, should effect somewhat of a removal similar to the kind now bein' plentifully discussed by us two first-class gents. Well, resumin' explinations regardin' this here jug play o' mine; I wants to lay it down cold, Bob, that I have decided to unload the Cripple Horse on a couple o' gents what really wants it. I'm a-tellin' yer this in confidence, Bob, and when I talks strictly low down, it's evidence o' Bill Coe havin' so'thin' nigh onto large regard fer the gent what's doin' the listin. Yes, sir; I unloads her fer a big wad before to-morrer noon."

There was an expression of searching inquisitiveness in Judd's eyes. He wondered what Bill was going to unload. The Cripple Horse Mine was at that time considered one of the most worthless mines in Sleepy Hollow, and although Coe had jumped it some months before from a pair of Connecticut boys, he had abandoned work on it immediately after "striking it rich" in Broken Skull Canyon. Judd could not understand why Coe had told him of the proposed deal with such a display of personal friendship. Could it be possible, he thought, that the owner of the Cripple Horse was loaded that early in the evening. He would talk with him again.

"Bill, I never knowed the Cripple Horse was surprisin' rich."

"She ain't, Bob, at this particular writin', but she will be when I gits through dallyin' with her. These here non-producin' properties lyin' 'round loose have got ter be properly set before commerce. I lets you in on the deal fer reasons sufficient untue the day, and I lays it down cold, Bob, that I intends ter whack up more or less copious. That's the way I lays it down, providin' always—yes, providin' always—that you keeps mum while the play's consummatin'."

"Bill, I keeps mum and lays low. Clinch!"

The two men shook hands and Coe smashed the bar again as evidence of his presence and desire for another drink all around. Alex was accustomed to the boisterous owner of the Cripple Horse, and in place of restoring order, he simply shoved out the black bottles and pulled back the fine gold. The custom of washing glasses had never struck Sleepy Hollow, thereby lessening the possibility of long waits between drinks. The ebb and flow of the whisky tide, therefore, was not entirely dependent upon the moon's phases.

"Well, I breaks off here, gents, and bids you all good-night."

It was Coe who spoke. His voice rose out of the tumult of laughter and miners' profanity. There was a crash as his glass struck the floor and burst into a thousand fragments. His action was looked upon as a high compliment to those with whom he had imbibed. He had destroyed the toasting cup. It was a great stroke of social diplomacy and not an act of wanton destruction.

Bill staggered through the doorway and reeled off down the canyon, singing short, homely songs to the diapason of Allen Stowell's quartz mill, that had been pounding away night and day since the discovery of a good quartz ledge on the other side of the hill. It was a good thing that Stowell came to Sleepy Hollow. He brought a diamond drill with him, and was greatly responsible for the advancement in the mining industry of the little camp. This progressive young man was looked upon as a dude when he first stepped off the stage, but by a well-developed independence and several declarations that he would fight anybody who wanted it, he finally rose in the estimation of the inhabitants, and adding this to his general push and business-like methods, soon found himself in a position to command respect and attention from every man in the camp.

It is not untimely to state that Stowell was a good poker player, and no respectable game was ever known to open up without the owner of the diamond drill taking a hand and performing the office of "banker" for the participants.

As Bill Coe passed out into the night Allen Stowell entered the saloon. Everybody was glad to see Stowell. It was a sure shot for a drink, and a chance to lay up against the bar with the only real superintendent in the diggings.

The poker gang clustered around him and clamored for a game.

"What we wants," said Bob Judd, "is a dead shore shot game lastin' all night and without limits."

"All right, boys. I'm in," responded Stowell. "Who else? Everything goes—flushes, straights, jack-pots, four bit ante."

Bob Judd made a rush for the little room at the end of the bar and took the first seat he could find in order not to be left out. No one ever had the poker passion like Bob Judd. Everything else was second to it.

"I'll take a whack at that game," chimed in Jack Montague.

"What's the matter of Hank Barnes gettin' in?" came from another quarter of the smoky room.

"And Dick Low?"

No one else indicated a desire to go up against such a quintette of poker sharps. They were the cream of the camp and played with a fierceness that only those who have the poker passion can understand.

The little private room where they were collected and where Stowell was dealing out the chips and taking properly weighed gold-dust in return, had been the scene of some blooded and bloody games. The tide of good and bad fortune had surged and splashed from man to man, and the nights had worn away while many a miner's pile dwindled and left him busted. The deadly bowie-knife had more than once bathed itself in crimson, and too often the bark of the six-shooter had filled the air with that stifling odor of powder that hangs like a pall over bullet-made corpses. The red stains on the floor and walls were but memories to the five men who were ready to begin the game and the symmetrical tri-colored stacks of poker chips began to rattle and click as the conversation ceased and the game opened.

"Cut for deal. Low deals."

Tap, tap, tap. The five players dropped their cards in the center of the table, and only the ruff, ruff, ruff of Bob Judd's shuffle broke the silence. It was to be a big game—at least for Bob Judd. The poker passion was upon him in all its might.

Bob dealt the cards. His whole demeanor had changed. He watched the other players with an intensity that would have entirely disconcerted a stranger. All hands knew Bob Judd—knew that he lived and died a thousand times in a long game. The click of chips was a whole orchestra to Bob. The curses of a disappointed gambler were his songs, and the frowns of anger his tableau. At every deal the light would blaze up in his eyes and then fade out as he looked blankly at his hand. His face told nothing to the opposition. It was the game with Bob, the all-absorbing passion; not the greed of gold.

He finished the deal and waited for the discard. Four more chips came up. All in.

The game went on. Bob lost again. He got up and walked out into the street.

"Cards?"

"Three."

"Two."

"Three."

"One."

Two for himself. He fondled his chips, but the set face did not change a muscle.

Hank Barnes passed. Jack Montague came in for five dollars. Dick Low tapped the table impatiently as he threw up his hand. Stowell raised Montague five. It was around to Bob.

"I'm in. Five more—make it ten."

Barnes threw up his hand, and leaned forward on his elbows. Montague again. He studied his cards thoughtfully a moment, dropped them, and shut his lips tightly.

Low was out before. Would Stowell see Bob's raise?

"Ten more," came from the owner of the diamond drill

Flip, flip! went Bob's thumb as he snapped the corners of his cards.

"I see it and call you."

"Full. Jacks up."

"Good!" said Judd, half to himself and half to Stowell.

He had lost. But what of it? It was poker—straight poker, and the passion was on. The deck was his Svengali. It had taken complete possession of him.

Three times he had full hands, and once four tens, but the rabbit's foot was turned against him. He had lost every deal. A tremulous glitter shone in his eyes, and a terrible passion was blowing up in his soul. Slowly his red, white and blue chips melted away. Their rattle sounded like the clatter of falling rocks in a tunnel. They seemed to be covering him up. A terrible struggle was going on within him, but his face showed nothing. The dull pounding of the five stamps at Allen Stowell's quartz mill sounded like thundering applause for their owner.

Bob's pile had been reduced to five chips.

"Five blind," he muttered. Stowell compared the blank space in front of Bob to the heaped stack of chips in front of himself. A sinister smile swept across his face. The game went on. Bob lost again.

He got up and walked into the street, paying no attention to Alex, who was dozing by the stove in the barroom. The poker passion had complete possession of him. He must have more gold-dust to play out the night. Where could he get it? Not a single light was visible among the cabins scattered along the gulch. He stood gazing around in a dazed sort of way, fingering his empty dust sack.

"By God!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I'll wake up Bill Coe. D——n him, he orter dig."

Bob immediately took a short-cut over Dead Man's Knob in order to get to Bill's cabin by the shortest possible route. The distance was less than a mile. Up, up, up. Twice he looked back at Alex Bunner's saloon and saw the indistinct forms of the four remaining poker players through the dirty window of the little room. A night wind had sprung up, and shifting from north to west brought the echoes of Stowell's stamp mill to Bob's ears. It burst upon him like a wave of mechanical crescendo and died away into a low reverberation of huzzas. It frenzied him. If Stowell would only wait until he got back. It was the dream of his life to break the owner of the diamond drill.

Steadily he made his way up the hillside. The wind was rising to a gale. Black clouds rolled up from the Western horizon and before the man with the poker passion reached the brow of the hill a terrible hailstorm burst from the black night and sent its frozen bullets against Bob with relentless fury. It could not last long, but the merciless pelting was more than he could stand. His eyes searched the streaked gloom for some refuge. Farther up the hill gaped the entrance to a deserted tunnel. Up to this time Bob did not know just where he was, but in a few hasty jumps and scrambles he found himself on familiar ground.

It was the entrance to the Cripple Horse Mine.

Outside the storm kept up its tattoo of hail. Bob moved cautiously into the tunnel to wait for things to blow over a little. He was leaning against the rocks cursing to himself, that he was not back at Bunner's fondling a stack of poker chips and feeding his passion.

What was that? Bob backed closer to the rocks. A streak of light shot past him and then all was darkness. It appeared again and again disappeared. Bob was never considered a coward, but the thumping of his heart seemed unusually loud to him. He slowly moved forward and cocked his pistol under his canvas coat. It clicked like the dripping of water from the top of the tunnel. Presently he heard something that sounded like the rattling of pebbles in a pan. He was all alert. The channel of the deserted mine was far from being straight, and had several offshoots at intervals auong the entire one hundred feet of its length. Suddenly the light blazed up again and Bob found himself hugging the rock like a lizard. He was near enough to the reflection that played along the wet rocks to uso all the caution he possessed. The rattling sound grew more distinct. Presently he came to a jutting granite bouldar. Noiselessly he peered over it and a sight met his eyes that would have been significant to any old school miner.

Bill Coe was salting the Cripple Horse Mine.

There he stood, with his back to Bob, throwing handful after handful of free gold-dust into the chinks and crevices of the end of the tunnel. He dropped a great quantity of the precious metal into the metamorphite deposit on the ground, and kicked it in with his heavy boot. The process of salting the mine would have seemed reckless to the uninitiated, but Bob knew too well that it meant the sale of the property on the morrow, at a greatly increased figure.

Bob did some strange reasoning here: Suppose the sale of the mine should fluke? All that gold would have to be panned out again. If the sale did fluke Bob would not get a cent out of it. Taking all things into consideration, coupled with a predominance of hard luck, it was not likely that Bill would divide with Bob anyhow. Bob thought it was wrong to let Bill compromise himself by salting a mine in such a respectable camp as Sleepy Hollow. He rested his six-shooter on the rock and sighted along the barrel. Bill was a good mark. Bob further reasoned that it was the duty of some citizen of the district to remove such bad characters as Bill. They were a menace to the prosperity of any section. There was no two ways about it; Providence had commissioned Bob to remove Bill. He didn't like to do it, but he had to, and he had to do it quick before Bill had thrown all the gold away and finished his nefarious work.

Just then Bill set the pan in a corner of the rocks and looked admiringly at his imposition. The candle reflected a yellow light from the glittering metal. Bob saw that he could remove Bill at this juncture without being put to the discomfort of seeing Bill drop the pan and spill more gold. The poker passion surged through him. The gold with which to play was in sight.

It was only a touch of the trigger and Bill lunged forward with an oath. Bob stepped up to him, and in a few seconds a deep rattle from the dying man's throat indicated that Bob had accomplished his work of reform. Bill was completely removed.

The reformer looked at him a little while, stripped the pan of its remaining metal and remarked, as he passed out into the night:

"Sorry, Bill, but that's the result of saltin' a mine."

The storm had gone rattling over the hills and the air was crisp with a biting chill. Bob started to retrace his steps to the poker game. Every sagebrush and shadow pointed an accusing finger, the flying clouds seemed to follow him, and the steady pounding of Allen Stowell's stamp mill was like the trample of pursuing feet. Down, down, down the slope he ran, jumping and starting from side to side to escape some imaginary enemy.

He struck the road running past Alex Bunner's, and bounded across it as the trees seemed to reach out for him. His perspiring hand clutched the buckskin sack containing the dead man's gold. He must compose himself. With a great effort he stopped at the door and got his breath. When he entered Alex was still asleep, and set-

ting his lips he walked into the little room at the end of the bar. Stowell looked up. "Are you in, Bob?"

For answer the reformer threw down his sack of gold and received its equivalent in chips. The game was resumed. The passion was still on. In fact it had never left him. The play was becoming desperate. Stowell was absorbing all the chips. He seemed to hold every good hand in the deck. About morning Bob's luck changed. He suddenly began to win. It was like the blazing up of an old fire. It seemed to roar and crackle in his eyes. He forgot all about the dead man stiffening in the drift of the Cripple Horse Mine, and played as though his whole life was in the next deal.

His plunging was something astounding, and his hands were without parallel in the history of poker at Sleepy Hollow. Could it be possible that Bob Judd was cheating? Dick Low suspected him. He would watch. Another deal was had. Bob stood pat. Hank Barnes, who dealt the cards, took one; the rest threw up their hands. It was between Bob and Hank, with the former's say.

"Twenty dollars."

"Raise you forty," from Hank.

"See you and raise to your stack."

"I'm in and call you."

Both men threw down their hands and reached for the pile, confident that they had each won it. Hank had held four kings, and Bob flashed up a royal flush in diamonds. Something fell from the folds of his coat as he leaned forward. It fluttered to the floor, and was instantly covered by Bob's foot. His eyes seemed to be on fire.

Dick Low's suspicions were verified. He tapped Hank on the arm and pointed to the floor. Hank understood.

There were two movements—one for Hank's knife and one for Bob's pistol, but Hank got there first, and the glistening blade disappeared in the reformer's neck. He clutched the stakes in his convulsions, and sank down on the table with the blood spouting out over the scattered gold-dust, where his poker passion and his life went out together.

Stowell opened the door and motioned Hank to pass out. The latter stood over the dead miner a moment, and said as he turned to go:

"Sorry, Bob, but that's the result of cheatin' at poker."

Sept. 1st number will contain the rousing story, "The Ringless Hands," by Daisy Kessler Briermann.

SEAWEED IS NEWEST FOOD

GERMANS are not the only people eating strange substitutes for ordinary food. The Dundee Food Control Committee of Dundee, Scotland, has recently had its attention directed to the value as a food of what is known as carrageen, or Irish moss, and it has been decided to bring the matter to the attention of the Food Ministry in order to consider what may be done toward popularizing this substance as an article of diet. It is claimed that the value of carrageen as a food has been fully recognized by Scotch and Irish people for generations, and until a comparatively recent period it occupied a prominent position in the daily food supply of the poorer classes, while of late it has gained favor among the middle classes.

Carrageen is known in various parts of Scotland under the name of "hen's dulse"; to the scientifically inclined it is known as Chondrus crispus. It grows abundantly on rocks and stones within the littoral zone, flourishing in salt water which has a dash of fresh in it. Among the poorer classes in Scotland it is boiled in water until it assumes the consistency of porridge and is served in a like manner with milk. It forms a jelly in about twenty or thirty times its weight in water, but is more commonly used in making various kinds of puddings.

This seaweed is often confused with several others which have been used as food by the Scottish people, but neither in its natural nor its prepared state has it any resemblance to these. There is little doubt that carrageen, if methodically collected and properly used, would help in augmenting the national food supply. In the bays and creeks on the west coast of Scotland the weed grows profusely, but the labor of collecting it in marketable quantities is great. On the east coast it can be found in any of the inland bays, and on the coast generally. It can be picked up on both sides of the Tay.

FINDS HER BROTHER AFTER 34 YEARS

LIKE a note from the grave was the letter received a short time ago by Lieutenant George Dinges, stationed at Tullytown, Penn., from his sister, Mrs. A. A. Haywood, of Longhill, Conn, who was kidnaped thirty-four years ago, when she was a baby, and who was long since given up as dead.

The story of Lieutenant Dinges and his sister being reunited reads like fiction. George Dinges and his sister, Ida May, were the only children of Mr. and Mrs. William Dinges, of Mount Kisco, Westchester County, N. Y. When Ida was two years old while she was playing about the house she suddenly disappeared.

It was later learned that she had been kidnaped. The parents spent considerable money and effort for many years in a search for her. A description of her was sent broadcast, but she could never be located, and not the least information about her was ever known.

The girl had been picked up somewhere and adopted by a Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard and taken with the family to New York, where she lived for five years. The family afterward moved to Long Hill, about eight miles from Bridgeport, Conn., where the Hebbards recently died. In their will they requested that all their legal and other papers be buried with them.

Meanwhile the missing child had grown to womanhood and had married A. A. Haywood. One child resulted from the union.

Following the deaths of the Hebbards, it leaked out that Mrs. Haywood had been adopted when a child and that her real name was Dinges. This news surprised the woman, and she at once began looking up all the families named Dinges throughout the country. She learned that a lieutenant named George Dinges was in the United States army and she communicated with the adjutant general, being informed later that the man she sought was stationed at Tullytown.

Mrs. Haywood went to Mount Kisco and from older residents learned more about the case, until she established the fact that Lieutenant Dinges was her brother. She then wrote to the lieutenant and he hurried to Longhill to visit her. Mrs. Haywood inherited both money and property from the Hebbards.

BAFFLED BY FATE

A TALE OF THE MISSISSIPPI

By COL. JOHN R. FELLOWS

"HERE, wake up there, you lazy sons of Africa!" shouted Mr. Durbin, the first mate.

Then he added: "Do you suppose we can lie here all night waiting for you? Move on the run there, move on the run! Crawling about like snails," he muttered, as the colored hands employed in loading the *Robert E. Lee* at the waterfront in St. Louis responded to the command.

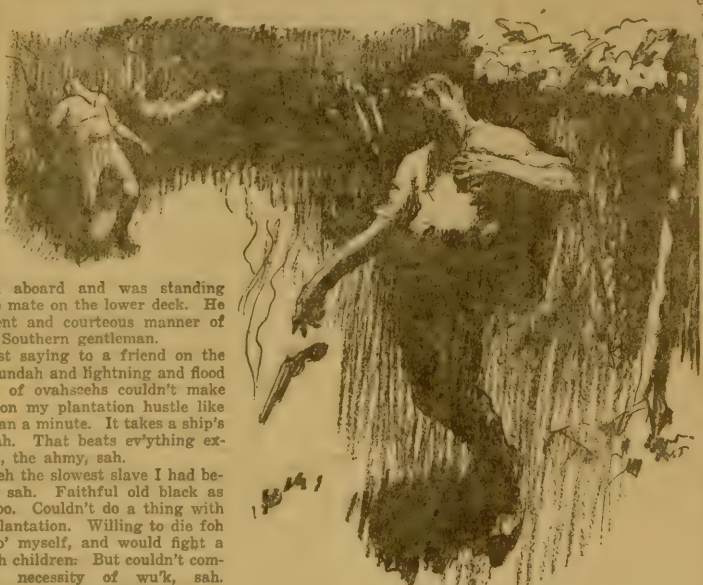
"Nothing like a ship's discipline, Mistah Durbin," said a passenger who had just stepped aboard and was standing alongside the mate on the lower deck. He had the accent and courteous manner of the old-time Southern gentleman.

"I was just saying to a friend on the levee that thundah and lightning and flood and a scoah of ovahsehs couldn't make the niggehs on my plantation hustle like that moah than a minute. It takes a ship's discipline, sah. That beats ev'ything except, pe'haps, the ahmy, sah.

"I remembeh the slowest slave I had befo' the wah, sah. Faithful old black as eveh lived, too. Couldn't do a thing with him on the plantation. Willing to die foh Mrs. Wack o' myself, and would fight a tigah foh ou'h children. But couldn't comp'ehend the necessity of wu'k, sah. Couldn't make him do a thing except amuse us and play with the little ones. Neveh got ti'ed playing the fiddle o' banjo.

"He could play anything. Anything that had a string. Dance a hoe-down all night, but wu'k, sah, he didn't understand. Couldn't be taught. Pe'fect child of natu'e, sah, and full of human sympathy, sah."

"Well, when I went out with my regiment, I took mah wife's advice and took old Ben along as mah body servant. Believe me, sah, he was the best soldieh I ever had. Didn't do any fighting, but was the liveliest messengeh and the most ene'getic nuhse in camp. Wu'ked night and day and didn't ca'h a snap feh dangeh. Couldn't make him rest."



Norris and Greene were facing each other with loaded pistols, and when the two reports rang out both gamblers fell.

"Yes, of course," said the mate absent-mindedly, and he shouted directions at the roustabouts, who were moving briskly in single file from levee to boat with their shoulders laden.

"We expect a late shipment, Mr. Durbin," called the captain from the second deck.

"That is very unfortunate, sir," answered the mate. "We ought to be away now. You know a great deal depends. The *Queen* sails on our time to-night."

"Can't help it, Mr. Durbin. Positive orders to await the arrival of a shipment of flour by Barton & Co., New Orleans. Time freight for the European war and a special run."

"Things seem to be combining, sir, to keep us this side of Tangle Bar to-morrow night."

"Such is our luck, then, Mr. Durbin, but the river is rising and we may have more water than we like."

"True, sir, but even a freshet don't mend matters at the bar."

"Did you speak to me, colonel?" asked the mate, turning to the passenger who had previously addressed him.

"I asked if it wasn't pretty early to expect a freshet. I'd have to be away from mah place when one came."

"It is rather early, colonel, and I hope it won't amount

to that. But I think the Spring has opened, and reports say that all our tributary streams are swelling."

"Now, that's just mah luck, just mah luck," said the colonel, meditatively stroking his imperial. "I might been home a week ago, sah, but I was induced to take paht in a social game at the Planteh's Hotel with young Bahton and several fwiends, and I was also induced theyby—I am saw'y to have to confess—to consent to having Mrs. Mack visit some fwiends up the State. Has Mrs. Wack come abo'ad?"

"Yes, colonel, I think you will find her in your stateroom."

"Thank you, sah."

Dusk was setting on this early March day and the evening was raw, drizzly and sullen.

The mate thought everything was going wrong and was out of sorts.

"Deuce take the luck," said he aloud to himself. "Nearly seven o'clock and no sign of that shipment. What are the owners thinking about, I'd like to know."

"I have several passengers in the saloon without berths and none for them," said the purser, approaching Captain Cutter.

"Do you think I would be safe in assigning those reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Barton?"

"That would be scant courtesy just at present," laughed Captain Cutter. "He has only been married a week and he is taking his bride home to New Orleans."

"But it is way past our leaving time," persisted the purser.

"He knows we are here," answered the captain.

Simultaneously with the arrival of several freight wagons a carriage drove down the sloping stone levee. From it a well-dressed young man alighted, and helping out a beautiful girl with blonde hair, large lustrous eyes and a sympathetic face, escorted her aboard the steamboat.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said he, addressing Captain Cutter. "Let me make you acquainted with my wife."

"The presence of Mrs. Barton amply repays us for the delay, answered the captain gallantly.

"This is the first mate, Mr. Durbin, dear," added Mr. Barton, and again she shook hands cordially.

"My husband has spoken of you both as his friends," said she with rare tact.

That remark, with the geniality of her greeting, put the mate in a good humor that lasted all night, despite the fact that his boat got away three hours after darkness had set in on a black night. The Mississippi was not a blaze of beacon lights. Away from the gleam of city and village, its narrow cuts hemmed and shadowed by giant trees, the only guide was the trained eye and unerring memory of the pilot, who had to know every reef, every point, every bank, by its shape or markings, and every shoal in the twelve-hundred-mile stretch of water. There were no lighthouses or bell buoys to mark the path. Little use they would have been if there were, for the treacherous stream was forever changing its course. Its alluvial bed was constantly shifting, banks were caving, towns of old times are inland towns now, the river having washed up its own levees and cut around in some places. In others it has veered away from the shipping piers and made a new channel for itself, shortening its course to the sea. On every trip up and down the pilot had to take minute notice of the whole course and, abilities being equal, the last pilot in would be the safest pilot to go out next.

The *Robert E. Lee* was the fastest boat of her day. She had the record from New Orleans to St. Louis, something less than three days and a half. Rival boats departing closely to her time were strained constantly to make important points ahead of her. The arrival of the boats were daily events in the river towns and crowds turned out to cheer the one that came first, and first in got the bulk of the freight and passengers.

Mrs. Wack retired early to her stateroom, and Barton left his young wife in her care, while he and the Colonel went down to the smoking room.

As they entered a flashy young man arose and came forward to greet them.

"Hello, Bart!" said he. "Howdy, Colonel," and he extended his hand. Barton took it formally and the Colonel bowed with a stiff, yet courtly dignity and kept his hands to himself.

"My friend Mr. Norris," said the young man, presenting a somewhat seedy fellow in a frock coat and slouch hat.

Again Barton shook hands, and again the Colonel made a frigid bow and ignored the hand offered him.

"Mr. Greene has been telling me that his family and yours used to be friends and neighbors, Colonel," said Norris suavely.

"We we'h such, sah, many yeahs ago, but I regret to say I have seen veh'y little of them since they moved Nawth, and I am gwieved to say that I have hea'd of Mistah Paul Greene veh'y often." The last clause was spoken with that impressive dignity of which the Colonel was so capable, and the way he emphasized the words "grieved" and "heard" left no doubt that what the Colonel had heard did no credit to Paul Greene.

"Oh, that's all right, Colonel; you mustn't believe all you hear," said Greene, and the Colonel simply bowed and said nothing.

"We are trying to start a little game; won't you and Barton join us, Colonel?" asked Greene. "Norris and this stranger here," pointing to a gentleman in the corner seat, "are agreeable and the mate thought he would take a hand when he gets off watch. It would only be a short session."

"Thanks fo'h you' invitation, but I must decline," replied the Colonel.

"None for me to-night, thank you," said Barton.

He and the Colonel then arose, and saying good-night started for their berths. The stranger got up, saying he guessed he didn't care for a three-handed game and he went out, leaving Greene and Norris alone in the smoking room.

"No chance for a strike to-night, and I am nearly broke," said Norris.

"There will be many nights before this trip is ended," said Greene, "if I am not mistaken. I don't believe we will get to New Orleans in a week. I hope not, anyway."

"Why?"

"Why! Haven't you any sense? Must you have details to help you understand anything."

"Didn't I tell you a hundred times that I have been trying to get with the house of Newcome & Edwards in New Orleans for a year? They are more than rivals of Barton & Co. They are enemies—personal and business enemies. I know the whole story. Newcome used to work for Barton, the elder, and he says he was treated like a dog after many years of service. He has only one ambition now, and that is to lay Barton & Co. in the shade."

"Well?"

"My, but your head is thick, Norris! I notified Newcome & Edwards a week ago that this trial shipment of Barton's was going forward to-day. Then they were glad to communicate with me for particulars, d——n them! They got their wires to work, and a load of flour from the same part of the Northwest as Barton's went forward on the *Queen* four hours ahead of us. If she clears the bar

before dark to-morrow night, and is lucky around Plum Point, she will beat us twenty-four hours into New Orleans, and a special ship is waiting there for her, which will knock the spots off Barton's into Liverpool, even if she's convoyed."

"Suppose the Lee gets over the bar, too?"

"We want to see that she doesn't."

"What have we to do with it?"

"The pilot needn't take her over if he doesn't care to take risks. No one can gainsay the pilot."

"You don't know the pilots, and I know them both," said Norris. "If you try to monkey with them you will be thrown overboard."

"As you say, you know them, so I will leave that to you."

"You are most kind," Norris said, ironically, "but as it isn't my funeral I don't care to attend."

"Was it my funeral when I saved you from the penitentiary?" Greene asked.

"No, nor did you take chances on going there yourself."

"Neither do you. If you can't buy them, jolly them. They won't refuse an occasional drink, I guess, and a little bad steering will do as well as anything."

"Taggard don't drink, and he would take Gardner's watch suddenly, if there was any bad steering. Beside, do you think the officers here have no sense? They know me and don't regard me as a brother."

"I suppose you are very sensitive to criticism," said the other, sneeringly. "Steamboat gamblers are usually so jealous of their standing in society," with a laugh.

"There is some excuse for my way of living, but there is none for yours," said Norris, hotly. "I never had a chance to live any other way and live like a gentleman. You had."

"Oh, fo blazes with your superior virtue. Do you think I'm in your business because I like it? Ain't I trying to get out of it? And ain't you doing all you can to help me?"

"Oh, shut up, and I'll help you," Norris said, tiring of the argument and rising to go. "But I'm not going to act on fool suggestions. Good-night."

"Hold on a minute," Greene said, quickly, catching his coat. "There is something else. I want Mrs. Norris to meet my friend Mrs. Barton," and the speaker chuckled.

"She is not Mrs. Norris, and she is not the one who is usually with me. I never saw her until yesterday."

"Of course she isn't Mrs. Norris. If she were there would be no satisfaction in having the saintly Mrs. Barton associate with her on this crowded boat. It won't be necessary for you to explain to the passengers that you didn't take her from a nursery," and he laughed loudly.

"I have my own reasons for not wanting her to go into the saloon," Norris said, with a look of disgust.

"I suppose you have your reputation to guard," Greene answered, with his customary sneer.

"Partly, and my own comfort as well as the comfort and right of others. You are contemptible, Greene," the gambler added, and he left the room.

"Without your assistance, my scrupulous friend," said Norris to himself, a few moments later as he handed the colored boy a note with instructions to take it to Mrs. Norris some time the next afternoon.

The sky was clear the next day. The boat got away from Cairo two hours and a half behind the *Queen*. The decks were crowded with passengers bathing in the glorious warmth of the Spring sun.

Colonel and Mrs. Wack and Mr. and Mrs. Barton were seated in a group on the hurricane deck, and Paul Greene was the subject of conversation. Mrs. Wack had started it by saying she would like to see Paul, not having seen him since he was a child.

"You may take my wu'd, Mrs. Wack," said the Colonel, "that you can affoad to lose his acquaintance. He is not a pusson whom I think desi'able fo'h any lady to know."

When the Colonel alluded to anybody as a person, it was evidence of his utter unfitness in the Colonel's eye.

"Why, Colonel," said Mrs. Barton, "isn't he recognized as a gentleman?"

"Pa'haps so—by some. If a man is meas'ued by what he should be instead of by what he is, I suppose he is a gentleman."

"Do you know him, Mrs. Barton?"

A blush came to Mrs. Barton's innocent young face as she answered that she did, having met him frequently in her social circle in St. Louis, where he had offered her polite attentions.

The company gathered from Mrs. Barton's conversation that she had made it known that those attentions were not agreeable.

"I wouldn't have much to say to him on the boat, sweetheart, if I were you," said Mrs. Barton's young husband.

"Yet you sat and smoked with him last night, Edgar," said she, playfully, while she looked lovingly at him.

"Yes, but it is different with a man, you know," said he.

"I understand, of course," she answered, with another caress. "I assure you I am not impatient to renew ...y acquaintance with him."

That afternoon the ship steered badly. Pilot Gardner was on duty. Captain Cutter made occasional trips to the pilot house and came out looking troubled, and frequently referred to his watch and consulted with the mate. No man could instruct the pilot. He was absolute master of the wheel. Mr. Durbin was stewing with anger.

"It's an outrage," said he. "What did Gardner say?"

"Told me he was perfectly sober, and didn't want any instructions from me, particularly as I didn't know what I was talking about," the captain replied.

It was nearing dark and they were outside of the bend that led to the bar.

"We will never get over it to-night with Gardner at the wheel. Don't you think we had better call Taggart?" asked the mate.

Turning their eyes to the pilot house at that moment, they saw Taggart going up the steps. In a quarter of an hour he came out again and answering the Captain's query, said:

"Gardner is all right now. I got him woke up, and realizing he has been a bit foggy he swears he'll bring her over the bar, or resign his commission. He can do it if anybody can."

Do it Gardner did, as it had never been done before, for, arriving there when darkness was about closing, he plunged straight for the shallow crossbar, instead of feeling his way through the cuts and water holes. He floated up to it easily and then rang violently for the forward motion of the engines. The boat creaked and shuddered and almost stopped for a second, while her flat bottom was tight in the mud. Then she plunged forward, literally mowing her own path. Next she was moving tranquilly in deep water.

Greene hunted out Norris and talked at him furiously.

"Go to blazes," said Norris. "I am sorry I induced the pilot to take anything at all, and I'm glad he saved his papers by getting over all right.

"It is only another proof of the saying," Norris said, provokingly, "'that man proposes and God disposes,' for I very much doubt if Gardner would have bucked the crossbar if he hadn't been desperate. If he had not been interfered with, I think he would be picking his way around there now, with chances of four to one in favor of getting stuck."

The river at this time was nearly on a level with the banks. Up steamers reported that some plantations in the lowlands were flooded, and small craft had been carried out of the channel and tangled in the mesh of woods. The rising river had made more apparent the keen judgment of Pilot Gardner and the proverbial treachery of the bar, for the river, seeking the easiest passage, had made away from it and cut through the crumbling banks and low brush at the side, while eddying around the rock obstructions.

The night was as mild as the day had been, and the moon was bright in a faultless sky. Everybody was listening dreamily to the black roustabouts who, perched on boxes and barrels in the boat's bow, were singing their improvised songs in charming melody. Their leader gave the tune, and the words related to anything that suggested itself to his mind at the moment. He would give one or more pithy sentences alone, and then the chorus would come in vigorously.

"De moon am bright
An' de ribber risin'—
An' de *Lee* am sailing on."

Barton and his wife approached dangerously near a quarrel when conversation was begun. He had cautioned her repeatedly about Paul Greene and she had deemed it tiresome and unnecessary. In reality he was actuated more by a jealous temperament than anything else, and Mrs. Barton felt nettled that her own discernment and discretion were not appreciated. There had been a disagreeable silence for a while and Barton went away in a huff to spend an hour with the men, leaving his wife in the saloon with Mrs. Wack. The Colonel was on the hurricane deck, where he expected to hear news from every passing craft of destruction to plantations in Mississippi.

Mrs. Wack went to her stateroom for a wrap, saying she would return in a moment, and she had scarcely gone when Greene came along with a gaudy looking woman, whom he boldly introduced to Mrs. Barton, and motioning her to a seat at the young woman's side took the one on the other side himself. Almost every seat in the saloon was filled at the time.

An indignant flush swept the fair young face, but before she had time to collect herself Colonel Wack entered, and walking hastily towards her, he said:

"I beg you' pahdon, but Mrs. Wack would like to have me bwing you to her," and smiling charmingly at her he escorted her with dignity from the room.

Mrs. Wack begged Mrs. Barton not to mention the circumstances to her husband, at least not before they got home. She felt sure he would do something rash. The Colonel also cautioned her, saying, danger aside, her husband's business made it imperative that he should not stop anywhere. The young woman was in a state of apprehension, terror and mortification, and couldn't understand what danger was meant, nor what the cause.

When the Colonel turned to go Mrs. Wack placed her hand affectionately on his arm, and looking at him said, as he stepped outside the door:

"Don't get excited, dear, and let it pass. Do so, for my sake."

The Colonel embraced her like a true cavalier and answered:

"No Southern gentleman can witness such an affront and let it pass. I shall resent it, foh' you' sake and the sake of all womanhood."

There was a poker game in progress in the card-room, and there Barton had sought rest for his mind. Greene had entered in the midst of a jack-pot and "bought in" much to Barton's disgust, which, however, he thought he had no right to express. The play had gone on for an hour and a half, and Norris and Greene had quarreled continually. The bad feeling that had been brewing between them since the first night out was being intensified. Table stakes was the limit, and Barton opened the pot for twelve dollars, and Greene, making anxious grimaces at Norris, who was dealing, called. Two strangers in the game did likewise, and Norris coolly stayed out and dealt three cards all around. Two aces, on which Barton opened, won, and Greene got up cursing like a pirate and hurling uncalled-for epithets at Norris. For a moment Norris deliberated, and then as the door was opened quickly and Colonel Wack entered, with less precision than usual, Norris leaped to his feet, and with his flat hand struck Greene a blow on the cheek that made him wince with pain.

"You will answer for this," shouted Greene, fiercely.

"I shall be delighted," said Norris, tuntingly.

"We will reach Wooded Island, above Memphis, soon after sunrise," suggested Greene.

"I shall be ready to go ashore," Norris coolly answered.

"I shall take pleasure in attending you, Mistah Nawis," the Colonel interposed, stepping forward and taking the gamblers' hand. "I had an account myself to settle with Mistah Greene, but I am compelled by what I have witnessed to delay action."

"I am grateful to you, Colonel," the gambler replied.

No one volunteered to attend Greene and he asked scornfully if he could employ any gentleman to accompany him, whereupon a stranger arose reluctantly and said he couldn't be hired for the work, but in the absence of a friend he would act for the gentleman.

Then there was silence for a moment. The moon fell aslant of the little open window towards which the eyes of Greene were now turned, as he stood motionless with a sneer and a look of defiance on his handsome, but sinister face. Before him was the after deck, covered with silver light, and electric crystals scintillated in the churning wake of the boat.

Back to his dear old Southern home went the memory and heart of Greene. How he would love to see it once more.

Mrs. Barton waited long for her husband that night. She sobbed herself to sleep in Mrs. Wack's room, and the Colonel returning late advised that she be not awakened as he would go to Barton's apartments. He assured her the trouble was all over so far as he and Barton were concerned. He had also learned that his plantation was intact and that they would be certain to beat the *Queen* into New Orleans, for she got out of the channel and went ashore a few miles below.

Sun was up two hours when the women arose. They could get no trace of the Colonel or Mr. Barton. Whispers were being passed around the boat, and then they heard talk of a duel on the island to which the boat was fast. Norris and Greene were facing each other with loaded pistols and when the two reports rang out both gamblers fell. While they were in an agony of fear, a little procession slowly emerged from a copse of woods a few hundred feet away. It was led by two colored hands, and on the shoulders of each was a burden. For a moment the two watching women suffered enough to kill them. Then their hearts bounded with relief, as they saw the Colonel, Mr. Barton, and two strange gentlemen, one with a physician's bag, emerge from the forest and follow solemnly in the rear. Greene had been baffled by Fate.

Coming in our next issue: "Pharao vs. Faro," by Ernest Jarrold.

THE FATAL PRINTS

A Serial Detective Story

By WILLIAM S. HALL

CHAPTER ONE

OLD BEN CROLY'S STORY

IT was a cold, dark, drizzly night in December that found a half-dozen members of the Metropolitan force of detectives sitting before a glowing grate in old Ben Croly's room, not far from headquarters.

They were all in the habit of dropping in on the old man on such evenings as this.

He was sure to be in, unless on a hot scent after an evil-doer, and they well knew that his grate would be glowing, his jug full, and tongue loose.

Old Ben Croly had been a full-fledged and famous detective when the most of them were mere babies or school-boys.

He was still on the force, though his hair and beard were gray as gray could be.

But there was plenty of fire and snap about him yet, and his grip was something wonderful for one of his age.

When he closed his hand on another's, the victim felt as if the world was about to collapse.

It must have been terrible for a criminal to feel it, when he was in his prime.

On the cold, rainy evening in question, the party of detectives were sitting around a table in the center of the room, in front of the glowing grate.

On the table was a little brown jug.

Never mind what was in the jug.

Nor the glasses either.

If the reader was ever a member of a stag party, he will not need particulars here.

One of the party, Joe Hicks, had just been congratulated on a successful hunt after a noted criminal.

He had chased his man across the continent, with the instinct of a sleuth-hound, and run him to cover.

The game was now in the Tombs, and the press was ringing with Hicks' praises.

"I didn't think you would ever be able to catch him, Joe," said Tom Allen, another well-known detective, as he lit a cigar and leaned back in his chair.

"Neither did I," put in Aleck Rawson. "The chief wanted me to take the case, but when I took a squint at the clues I declined, or rather begged off. You know the chief never wants a man to take a case without any confidence in his ability to pull it through."

"Yes," said another, "the chances were all dead against success. What did *you* think of it, Uncle Ben?"

"I thought it could be worked up," answered the old veteran, "and told the chief so."

"Did he speak to you about it?" Rawson asked.

"Yes."

"When?"

"After you begged off. He wanted me to take it, but I was deep down in another case, and told him to give it to Joe."

"The devil!" exclaimed Joe.

"Yes. I told him you could work it if any man on the force could, and yesterday he told me that I had judged right."

"Well, hanged if I don't owe you a suit of clothes for that, old man!" said young Hicks, grasping the old detective's hand and shaking it warmly. "It has laid the foundation of my fortune as well as reputation."

"Oh, it merely gave you a chance, my boy," said Croly. "You would have worked your way up, anyway. I knew it was in you, an' that a good case like that one would bring it out. I use to have a hard pull once in a while years and years ago, some of which would make my head swim even to think about 'em. But pluck and faith would always bring me around with my man. The first thing a detective ought to do when he takes a case is to make up his mind that he *can* work it and then go ahead.

"If you haven't any faith in the success of the job you had better give it up to somebody else who has. If a man *believes* he can do a thing the chances are that he will do it, if he is a sane man of good grit. That's why Joe succeeded, eh, my boy?"

"Well," answered Joe, "I was so proud that the chief had selected me for the job that I made up my mind to work it up at every hazard."

"That's it. I had a case very much like it nearly thirty years ago, when I was about your age. I knew it would make my fortune if I succeeded, and so I went in to win."

"What case was that, Uncle Ben?" Rawson asked.

"It was the Creighton murder case."

Every detective on the force had heard of that celebrated case.

The detectives of England and France had studied it and pronounced it the finest piece of detective work the annals of crime afforded.

At the mention of the case the little party straightened up and listened.

"Uncle Ben," said Joe, after a pause, "you have related to us many of the adventures in your career, but never said much about the Creighton case. Won't you give it to us now?"

The old man stroked his gray beard, and gazed at the glowing coals in the grate.

He seemed wrapt in thought, and there was a far-away look in his eyes.

Then he turned toward the little brown jug on the table.

Like all well-regulated jugs, it had a handle on one side of it.

Seizing the jug by the handle, he tilted it over toward a glass.

The glass was not a mirror, understand.

On the contrary, it was concaved and cylindrical in form.

Something ran out of the jug into the glass.

Then that something ran out of the glass into his mouth, which seemed to give immense satisfaction to the old graybeard.

"The truth is, boys," he said, after wiping his mouth with a red silk handkerchief, "I haven't said much about that case because I received a wound while on the job, which has never been healed."

Exclamations of surprise burst from the five listeners.

"By the great Mystery!" cried Tom, "I never heard of that!"

"Nor I," chorused the others.

"Of course, you didn't," said the old man, knocking the ashes from his cigar, "for I didn't give it away to a living soul."

"Where was it? Why couldn't the surgeon heal it?"

"I never even let the surgeon know of it. He couldn't reach it, for it was in the heart, and it was inflicted by a woman."

"Oh—oh!"

The listeners looked first at the old man and then at each other.

They remembered that he was a bachelor, who never took any notice of women, and knew that he now had a story to relate in which a part of his own heart-history was mingled.

"Yes, the wound never healed," he added, "and never will. You know now why I never married. It all grew out of that Creighton murder case. While it made my fortune and reputation it also wrecked me in another sense."

The old man turned to the little brown jug again, and took another drink, as if to encourage himself in unfolding a secret that had slumbered for upwards of thirty years in his breast.

"You've all read of the case," he continued, "for it has been written up a hundred times since."

"Yes—yes," they responded.

"Well, old Creighton was an uncommonly miserly old fellow who was reputed to be very rich.

"He owned a good deal of property which yielded him a large income.

"But he looked like a man who hadn't a dollar in the world, so meanly did he dress.

"His actual expenses for food did not amount to more than two dollars a week.

"He lived in a house over on the East Side.

"The house belonged to him, but he occupied only two rooms in the basement.

"The rest of the house was let to tenants who paid monthly rents in advance.

"The front basement room he used as an office for the transaction of the business of his estate, and also as a sleeping apartment.

"The rear room he used as a kitchen, dining and storage-room to which he never admitted anybody under any pretense.

"He did his own cooking whenever any cooking was to be done.

"But that was very seldom.

"He generally bought his food in such shape that it was ready to be eaten without any further bother.

"He kept his windows barred, and such ponderous locks and bolts on the doors that the tenants in the house believed that he had fabulous sums of money secreted in his rooms.

"Nobody seemed to know anything of his past history.

"He never spoke to any one of his people, or even mentioned that he had any relatives living.

"People only knew him as a very miserly man, who loved money above everything else in this world.

"One morning he was found dead in bed.

"Some of the tenants made the discovery through a barred window and gave the alarm.

"The police went to the place and took charge.

"They allowed no one to enter until an investigation was made.

"In a few hours they reported to the chief that it was uncertain whether it was a case of suicide or murder.

"I happened to be in the chief's office when he received the report.

"All the best men on the force were engaged at the time.

"Turning to me, he said:

"'Ben, go over and see what *you* can find out about it,' and I hurried out to attend to it.

"You see, the chief didn't attach much importance to the case at the time.

"When I reached the house I found the street blocked by an immense crowd of people, all eager to learn the particulars of the murder.

"They were all tenement-house people, and looked just like a mob against poverty and want.

"The police were in charge.

"I found the body lying just as it had been discovered.

"It presented a ghastly appearance.

"The terrible wound had been made with a view to quick work.

"A razor lay on the floor by the bed.

"A glance showed that the death wound had been given by that instrument.

"The coroner was in the room when I entered.

"'What do you want here?' he asked, looking at me over his gold-bowed spectacles.

"'The chief sent me here to look into this case,' I replied.

"'Humph! Why didn't he send a detective while he was at it?' he said.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' I answered. 'He did send his best man.'

"The old coroner was huffy, and asked:

"'What can *you* detect, I'd like know?'

"'I can detect a gentleman or a hog, at a glance, sir,' I replied, 'though I am the youngest man on the force.'

"The hot flush that surged up into his face told me that my shot had hit him hard, and I was satisfied.

"The two officers in charge grinned from ear to ear, as the coroner turned away, muttering something about impudent upstarts.

"You may readily know that my opinion of the case was not sought by the coroner.

"He went on with *his* investigations, and I went quietly to work with mine.

"His verdict said it was a case of suicide."

CHAPTER TWO

A CASE OF MURDER

"THE coroner based his verdict on the razor that was found on the floor, by the bedside of the dead miser.

"Another thing that strengthened the suicide theory was the fact that no evidence of any robbery having been committed was discovered.

"A thief would have helped himself to any valuables near at hand, under ordinary circumstances.

"When the coroner went away with the razor, he gave permission to have the body removed.

"But having been sent there by the chief, I was determined that *my* report should be based upon my own investigation, and so I held on to the premises until I had made certain critical examinations of the doors, locks and windows.

"In this I was aided by Biddy O'Rourke, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Mrs. O'Rourke, one of the tenants on the first floor above the old miser's.

"I had heard from one of the tenants outside that Biddy was the only one of the tenants whom Creighton would allow to assist him occasionally in cleaning up his rooms.

"'Tell Biddy to come in here,' I asked of one of the tenants.

"A dozen called out at once, and in a few minutes a buxom young rosy-cheeked girl came to the door.

"'Is it me ye want, sur?' she asked.

"'Are you Biddy O'Rourke?'

"'Yes, sur."

"'Then come in here and show me what you know of the things in this room.'

"She came in, and a glance at the ghastly object on the bed made her shudder like one with an ague.

"'Don't get nervous, Biddy,' said I. 'Nothing can come of it.'

"'Sure, an' it's awful,' she said.

"'So it is,' I said. 'But we won't stay here long. Did you know much about him, Biddy?'

"'No, sur. He was that miserly that he would never be after lettin' any one know anything about him.'

"'Did you ever enter his rooms to do anything for him?' I asked.

"'Sure an' I did, an' niver a cint did he give me for it.'

"'He was a very stingy man,' said I, leading her.

"'Indade he was, sur.'

"'Would you know, Biddy, if anything had been taken out of these rooms?'

"'I would, indade,' she replied. .

"'That's just what I want you for,' I said. 'Now come with me, and tell me if anything is missing,' and I led her into the room where the late landlord had kept his things.

"She glanced quickly around the room and said:

"'Sure, an' not a thing has been moved.'

"'Are you sure of that?'

"'Faith, an' me eyes don't deceive me,' was the reply.

"'I'll look among his things and see,' and then I began to open the drawers of an ancient-looking bureau.

"Biddy looked on and declared that nothing had been touched.

"Everything looked as though the dust of ages rested on it.

"In one of the drawers I found a shaving cup, soap, razor and brush.

"A sudden thought flashed through my mind at sight of them.

"'Biddy,' I asked, turning to the buxom girl at my side, 'did Mr. Creighton always shave himself?'

"'Sure an' he did, sur. It was not the likes of him that would pay a barber a cint.'

"'So I thought. Did you ever see him shave himself?'

"'Yes, sur. Many is the time I brought him hot wather an' niver a cint did he offer me.'

"'Did he use *this* razor?'

"'Yes, sur—every time."

"'He didn't have *two* razors, did he?'

"'He have two razors? Niver! He niver had two of anything but money, an' it's millions he has of them, I'm thinking.'

"I looked at the razor.

"It was an old one that had evidently been used many years.

"It had been honed and strapped by one who was not a practical barber.

"Here was the first hint I received that the case was not a suicide.

"I reasoned that Creighton was a man whose miserly habit had become a second nature with him.

"He would never have spent money for a razor to kill himself with, when he already possessed a good one.

"'Biddy,' said I, handing her the razor, 'would you know this razor again?'

"'Sure an' I would, sur.'

"'All right. I will keep it for use in the investigation,' and I placed it in my pocket.

"An hour's search confirmed the fact that nothing had been taken from the rooms, a strong barrier against the theory that murder had been committed.

"Suddenly I noticed several whitish spots on the floor leading in the direction of a heavily barred window in the rear of the room.

"They seemed to have been recently made there.

"I traced them and found that they came from lime that had stuck to a boot or shoe.

"Near the fire-place in the front room was a square board about a foot wide by two in length, on which some lime mortar had been mixed with an old table-knife.

"On one side of the fire-place were several bricks which it was quite evident, had recently been put in place.

"'Were those bricks out?' I asked of Billy, who kept by my side wherever I went.

"'Yes, sur. He brought in four more to put there last night.'

"'Are you sure of that?'

"'Yes, sur. I saw him with 'em whin he come in.'

"'Somebody stepped on this lime here, you see,' said I, pointing to a well-defined shoe-print on the half-hardened lime mortar on the board.

"'Yes, sur,' she replied, her eyes following the white stains on the floor.

"A thought occurred to me that I ought to examine the shoes of the dead man.

"I did so.

"There were no signs of the lime mortar on either of them.

"Then I instinctively smelled a mystery.

"But the mystery was the absence of any ostensible motive.

"It was then, for the first time in my career, that I felt an irresistible desire to unravel mysteries.

"A stern resolve came up in my soul to work out the mystery that now seemed to enshroud the fate of the old man.

"It came to me instinctively, boys, that the man who had stepped into that little pile of lime mortar was the murderer of the old miser.

"A good detective always give his instincts great consideration, you know.

"If he doesn't he will very often get left.

"Well, feeling sure that I had stumbled on a clue, I at once followed the white stains on the floor to the barred window in the rear room.

"There they stopped.

"I could not trace them in any other direction.

"Biddy O'Rourke was by my side as deeply interested, apparently, as myself.

"She watched me as a cat would watch a mouse.

"At the window we both came to a halt.

"The strong iron bars ran up and down, and seemed to defy egress by the window.

"We both seemed to be thinking of the same thing at the moment—how impossible it was for one to get out through the window.

"Suddenly Biddy exclaimed:

"'Howly mither o' Moses! Do ye moind that now!'

"'What is it?' I asked.

"'Thim thracks beyant the windy!' and she pointed to the white tracks on the stone flagging outside.

"I gazed at them in amazement.

"There they were—the same as those on the floor inside.

"Yet the iron bars were on the window just *four inches apart.*

"Biddy saw the puzzled expression of my face, and crossed herself a dozen times in as many seconds.

"That the person who made the tracks had passed through the window, I hadn't the shadow of a doubt.

"But how?"

"There stood the bars apparently as firm and solid as on the day they were put up.

"I took hold of them and tried their strength.

"It would have taken four men of my size and strength to remove one of them.

"Yet some one had passed out of that window.

"On the edge of the stone facing outside was a white speck where the shoe with the lime mortar on it had touched as it was drawn through.

"I tell you, boys, it was the worst puzzle I ever tackled, and I've met with some tough ones in my time.

"At times I would stop and wonder if I was not dreaming.

"But a glance at the earnest, rosy-cheeked Biddy by my side would recall me, and I would again rack my brain in an effort to unravel the mystery.

"'He went through here, Biddy,' I said, breaking the silence of a pause of several minutes, 'and I am going to do it, too.'

"'Sure, an' it's too big ye are, sur,' she remarked, looking at me, and then at the bars.

"'There's some trick about it that I am going to find out,' I said, and then I took hold of each iron bar and shook it with all my might.

"They all rattled in their sockets, but seemed to defy displacement.

"Two flat bars crossed at the top and bottom, and the round bars passed through holes in them.

"I pushed upward one of the bars, and, to my surprise, found that the lower end came out of the socket in the stone window-sill.

"The upper end struck against the stone-work above.

"But by tilting it at an angle of forty-five degrees I found that the upper end of the bar projected beyond the stone-work and thus could be drawn clear through!

"'That settles it,' I said, the moment I made the discovery.

"'Sure, it's a wise man ye are, sur,' said Biddy, gazing at me in no little wonder.

"But I was too much engrossed to pay any attention to her.

"I seized another bar and another, till I found that four of the bars could thus be displaced.

"But the others could not be moved an inch.

"Then I examined the bars and found that the lower ends had been sawed in two, between the woodwork and the stone window-sill.

"Getting down on my knees, I could see where a fine steel saw had been used in cutting the bars asunder.

"I replaced the bars, and then followed the trail outside.

"It led to a point where a high board fence obstructed further progress.

"There it could be seen where the murderer climbed over, and made his way through two other yards, after which he landed in a vacant lot, and thus got away.

"'Biddy,' said I, as I rejoined her a few moments later, 'I want you to make me a promise. Will you do it?'

"'Shure, an' why shouldn't I promise a rale gintleman?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'why shouldn't you? You are lady enough to do it and keep it.'

"At last she looked as proud as ever a peacock did, and I added:

"'You have seen enough to know that it's a murder?'

"'Shure, an' I have, sur,' she answered.

"'If you do not say a word to any one about it I'll catch the murderer. But if you do he'll hear of it, and get away.'

(*To be continued.*)

THIEF HAD LOOT HOARDED

HENRY JONES, known to the underworld as "Diamond Dick," a notorious criminal of London, was arrested the other day on a charge of attempting to pick pockets.

In his possession was a key which fitted a safe in a large deposit vault. The safe contained nearly $5,000 worth of property and two wax impressions of keys, one being the impression of the master key of a large Piccadilly hotel, where Jones had been staying for nearly two years.

His bank pass-book showed $1,000 to his credit. He was given three months hard labor as a suspected person.

RECLAIMING MOUNTAINS OF WASTE COAL

SO VALUABLE has coal become that throughout the anthracite region of Pennsylvania to-day hundreds of men are at work reclaiming the immense quantities of fuel thrown away in the old wasteful years when the supply seemed inexhaustible. Coal dust used to be regarded as worthless, and veritable mountains of it were piled up along the Lehigh and Susquehanna Valleys. One at Scranton was estimated to contain 15,000,000 tons of pure fuel, and others were larger. These masses contained many lumps, but it was easier to mine fresh coal than to sift them out.

As mining became more expensive attention was turned to these huge waste heaps. Powerful streams of water were turned upon them, the dust washed away, and the lumps sent to market. This method was abandoned, for to-day each ton of coal dust is valuable. Pressed into briquettes, it is running locomotives and cooking the family dinner, while carried on an air blast it produces the intense heat needed in cement kilns. These waste heaps are annually producing millions of tons of fuel.

The work of reclamation is also going on under water. For years quantities of coal have been washed into the streams by floods or lost from barges, and extensive operations are going on to recover these accumulated losses. In one year the bed of the Susquehanna River yielded 100,000 tons of coal.

CURRENT NEWS

WAR HAS ENDED KENTUCKY FEUDALISM

Feudalism in Kentucky is dead. The feudalistic forces have been decimated by the war call. A majority of those whose names became prominent when encounters formerly occurred are now fighting the Germans in Picardy.

BUILDS MORE SHIPS THAN DESTROYED

The shipping of Italy being built surpasses by 200,000 tons that destroyed by the enemy and the tonnage under construction is increasing daily. This announcement was made at Rome on June 24 by Under Secretary Orlando in Parliament.

BURGLAR OBEYS PARROT

"Drop it, drop it!" And the burglar did. He stopped his search for jewelry with more than $500 within easy reach and kept only one rug valued at $100. And all because the parrot in the house of C. E. Loomis, in Seattle, Wash., saw the thief and gave the alarming command.

ASH TREES FOR AIRPLANES

The appeal of the Aerial League of the British Empire for ash trees for aeronautical purposes has resulted in between three and four thousand trees being offered within the last few weeks, according to *Flight*. The government requirements in the next twelve months are expected to exceed 200,000 trees.

BOTTLE OF HOT WATER REMOVES SPLINTER

To remove a splinter from the hand, fill a wide-mouthed bottle nearly full of hot water, says *Popular Mechanics*. Thrust the injured part over the mouth and press it slightly. The flesh will be drawn down and shortly the splinter will be exposed under the action of the steam. This method is far better than the common and dangerous practice of pricking the flesh with a pin or knife point. The usual antiseptic solution should be applied.

POISONED WATERS KILL PEARL OYSTERS

In February of this year a phenomenon known locally as "El Turbido" appeared at a part of the pearl-fishing ground near Margarita Island, Venezuela. This consists in a decomposition or poisoning of the waters, which brings about the death of the oysters and the consequent destruction of the beds.

The immediate loss in pearls from this disaster is estimated at over half a million dollars, and it was thought best to prohibit fishing in the infected district.

AN INDIAN "MIRACLE" EXPLAINED

A note in "Nature" refers briefly to a lecture by Sir J. C. Bose, which describes and explains a bit of Hindu wonder-working—the "praying palm tree" of Faridpur. At the time of evening prayer the tree is seen to bow its head in prostration, and it resumes an erect attitude the next morning. The lecturer devised special apparatus to record continuously the movements of the tree by day and night, and thus discovered that the movements were due to the diurnal change in temperature.

UNDERTAKER BARS CRAPE

Jeremiah G. Gilbert, sixty-one years old, an undertaker of Pottstown, Pa., who died the other day, and who in twenty-six years had conducted 3,554 funerals, was of such modest taste that he wanted no lavish display at his funeral. He directed that no crape should be placed on the door and there should be no barred shutters. He wanted things at his home just as if he were alive; besides, he wanted no long funeral sermon and requested only very brief services at his home.

BLIND MAN A FARMER

Sanford Eshelman of Eaton, Ind., a blind man, not only operates successfully a soft drink place and cigar store there, but this year he has put out ten acres of tomato plants, which he is personally looking after with the aid of some outside labor. He bought the land a few weeks ago out of the earnings of his store, paying at the rate of $130 an acre. Eshelman has been blind from childhood, but has refused to permit this affliction to be a serious handicap.

LEWIS GUN IN FIRST PLACE

According to a despatch from London, the Under Secretary of the War Office stated, recently, in the House of Commons, that the Committee appointed, as the result of the agitation caused by the use of a new type of Madsen gun in the British Army, to test the merits of different machine guns, had placed the various guns examined in the following order of merit: First, Lewis; second, Light Hotchkiss; third, Madsen. He stated also that the decision of the War Office Committee had been unanimous.

OVER 200 SHEEP ARE KILLED BY BEARS

More than 200 sheep have been killed by bears in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, in the last few weeks, it was announced by Charles A. Reese, of the State Department of Agriculture.

Light hunting seasons have allowed the animals to multiply in great numbers.

Twenty-five old sheep and even more lambs belonging to L. D. Sharp have been killed. Other owners have suffered. An organized bear hunt is being planned, and will be started this fall.

MONUMENT BEGUN 70 YEARS AGO

The first stone of the Washington Monument in the national capital was laid by President Polk seventy years ago. More than thirty-six years passed before the capstone was set in position in 1884. The height of the monument is 555 feet, and it is the loftiest structure of its kind in the world. There are, of course, many buildings and towers which are higher, but no monuments. The highest point reached by the builders of the ancient world was achieved in the pyramid of Cheops at Memphis, Egypt, which is 450 feet in height.

COPPER SCARCITY IN GERMANY

It is significant that the German Department which has to look after the metal supply has issued a bulletin stating that the stores, etc., captured in the Somme offensive last spring did not yield as much metal as was expected. Says the bulletin: "The demand for metals, especially copper, continues to be so great, that it has been necessary to issue new confiscation orders . . . the metal which is to be confiscated does not go merely to the army, but it has to satisfy the whole needs of the war; the navy, the railways, the post and our war industry in the widest sense have to be provided for."

SUN TAKES VOLUME OF WATER FROM LAKE

Evaporation of water from Gatun Lake, Canal Zone, reached a new high record during the month of March, this year, says *Popular Mechanics*. Calculations show that the sun withdrew 3,248,000,000 cubic feet of water from the body, the equivalent of 1,213 cubic feet a second for the period of thirty-one days. This was one cubic foot a second in excess of the volume of water passing through the pen-stocks of the Gatun hydroelectric station, which, during the same month, produced 4,681,000 kilowat hours of energy. This in turn shows the loss of potential current due to the sun's effect.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LATEST U-BOATS

The report of the British War Cabinet for 1917 stated that the German submarine has a surface speed up to 18 knots and a submerged speed of 10 to 11 knots. It carries from 15 to 20 torpedoes and can travel completely submerged for 100 miles, and can remain under water resting on the bottom for periods up to 48 hours. Although torpedoes used on surface ships have ranges up to five miles and speeds up to 40 knots, the range and speed of submarine torpedoes are much less, the latest boats preferring to wait until they are within 500 or 1,000 yards of the ship attacked, the speed of the torpedoes being sacrificed to an unusually heavy charge of high explosive in the war-head.

PRIVATE SHAPIRO'S LIGHTNING MATHEMATICS

Lieut.-Col. T. J. Powers, cantonment Chief of Staff, Camp Upton, N. Y., and several officers witnessed a demonstration the other day of rapid manipulation of figures by Private Jacob Shapiro, a statistician in the adjutant's office. Shapiro, in less than four seconds, gave the correct total of three columns of figures, fifteen rows deep, and instantly told the number of books on Colonel Powers' shelf and the number of matches thrown from a box.

Besides working out many figure problems with startling speed, he called off the full name and rank of each of a dozen officers he had met a few minutes before. Shapiro is twenty-three years old and was drafted two months ago. He says his ability is through making quick-mind photographs.

BANDAGES FOR SURGICAL DRESSINGS

The use of crape paper for bandages for surgical dressings is described by Med. Inspr. H. F. Strine, U. S. N., in the current issue of the U. S. Naval Medical Bulletin. Medical Inspector Strine writes: "With the increasing scarcity of cotton the necessity of finding some substitute for it is constantly growing. During the past month bandages of crape paper have been used in the surgical wards of the U. S. Naval Hospital, Washington, D. C., with very satisfactory results, especially in cases where the simple retention of dressings is all that is desired. These bandages are remarkably strong, possess a considerable degree of elasticity, can be very neatly applied and are very much cheaper than gauze. It is believed that their more general use throughout the service will result in a distinct saving of gauze. In cases where there is much discharge from wounds or where moist dressings are used, the paper bandages cannot be employed."

ATE TO ENLIST.

In the last few weeks several young men have come to Kansas City to enlist in the navy, only to find they were underweight. That was a tip to Cecil Biddle, twenty-four-year-old son of Cal Biddle, sheriff of Brown county.

Before he went to the recruiting office he drank two quarts of water and ate seven bananas. As he waited his turn to be examined he got fearful lest he would be underweight, so he slipped down stairs and drank four glasses of water and ate five more bananas.

When it came his time for examination he was still a bit light, but was so well physically that he was accepted.

"It sure makes a fellow sick to stuff that way, but it's worth it," he explained after the ordeal. He will leave soon with a large number of other recruits for the naval training station. Young Biddle was graduated from the Hiawatha High School a few weeks ago.

SECOND-HAND STORE OF THE BATTLE-LINE

Second-hand dealers do a thriving trade in the war zone. Not only have they no trouble in securing their stocks in regions where the wreckage of war is to be found on all sides, but there is considerable demand on the part of soldiers for various second-hand articles. Then there is a big opportunity for the display of ingenuity; the second-hand dealer can do much in the way of restoring partly or wholly the pieces of wreckage which come to him, thereby increasing their sales value.

Typical of the battle-line second-hand shop is that depicted in a magazine illustration, presumably taken at the rear of the Canadian battle-front in France. Here may be seen a Canadian out for bargains and evidently having found one in the shape of an old soft hat. It is said of these second-hand shops that they contain anything from a bird-cage to a cradle, and aside from these two articles the illustration shows a phonograph horn, bicycle frame, chair, floral frames, hot-water bag and several other equally varied objects.

GERMAN SNUB AVENGED BY HINDU GENERAL

Besides his loyalty to the British Empire, Sir Pertab Singhi, most famous military commander of India, had a personal insult to avenge upon the Germans when he led his gallant native soldiers in some of the hottest fighting on the western front in the early days of the war. He accompanied the British troops sent to help quell the Boxer rebellion in China, and there he was treated with the respect due his character and rank by all save the Teuton officers, by whom he was openly snubbed.

This aroused his bitter animosity against all things Prussian, and 1914 brought an opportunity for revenge. He won a high reputation among Allied commanders by the way in which he handled his troops. Sir Pertab at the age of seventy-three, nearly sixty years of which he has been a soldier, has the appearance of a man of fifty. He ruled as Maharajah of Idar from 1902 to 1911, when he abdicated in favor of his adopted son. He has often expressed the hope that he may die fighting in the present war.

STRANGE OLD COINS IN INDIA

In 1908 the independent state of Hyderabad, India, obtained a modern mint and called in the coins that had been current up till that time. The old mint of Hyderabad was little more than a coppersmith's shop in which scrap copper of all sorts was melted up, hammered into plates, cut up into very rough approximations of one tola in weight, and stamped between dies, one of which was in the anvil and the other in a tool held in tongs. A blow from a sledge-hammer made the impression. There was no regularity in shape, weight, or stamping, nor was the metal uniform in quality.

The mint could not furnish supplies fast enough, and licenses were issued to coppersmiths to assist in production. Naturally non-licensed persons began to manufacture, and adulteration with lead was so flagrant that when several tons of these coins were sent to England as old metal they were returned on account of their impurity, and were finally worked up into brass for local consumption. A "dub," if held in the flame of a spirit lamp, would before it reached red heat begin to discharge very fine jets resembling mercury; the lead, having reached its fusing point, burst from the copper with a force indicating a very high internal pressure.

GEESE TOO FAT

Later flocks of wild geese, too fat to fly across the mountains on their migratory visit to northerly climes for the summer, are stranded in the Sacramento River near Redding, Cal.

This is a report from Deputy Warden J. S. White, of Shasta County District, to the State Fish and Game Commission to-day. White states that hundreds of geese are loitering about back yards and can make no further progress, being unable to negotiate the rapids of the Upper Sacramento.

State Deputy Commissioner George Neale explained the unusual conditions as being due to the great abundance of goose grass up and down the valley because of the late rains. When Mr. and Mrs. Goose found themselves weighted down by suddenly acquired avoirdupois, they took to the river as the next natural thing to do, since flying was out of the question. Swimming was good until they encountered rapids, and now they can go no farther.

Deputy White says the geese are as tame as house cats, but he is guarding the flocks until some disposition is made of them or means found for boosting them over the mountains on their way North.

OIL CAKE FOR FUEL

The high price of coal and the shortage of ocean freight space have produced a condition in Egypt under which cottonseed oil cake is being used as a subsitute for coal as fuel.

The crushing industry in Egypt produced a maximum of about 85,000 tons of cottonseed oil cake annually for which there was no local consumption. As the result of a lack of shipping facilities large stocks of cake accumulated in Egypt.

The high price of coal coupled with a desire for economy in its use induced experiments with local products as a substitute. The relation of the calorific value of cake to coal was found to be 1¾ tons of cake to 1 ton of north country large coal.

The present price of coal in Egypt is about $80 a ton. The price of oil cake has been fixed by the government at various times during the past two years at figures ranging between $32.50 a ton and the present price of $15. Cake is now being largely used in place of coal in boiler plants, hotels, restaurants and private houses.

Boilers and stoves, it appears, are not detrimentally affected through the burning of cake. One large concern saves two men per boiler in burning cake instead of coal. Cake ash has a value as fertilizer of about $25 a ton.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST ELECTRIC SHIP

In these days, when tonnage is more important than anything but men, it is interesting to read of a new electric ship launched in England, which is said to accommodate from 8 to 10 per cent. more cargo than any steam vessel of its size. It is the largest electric ship in the world.

The London *Post*, commenting on it, says:

"One of the most interesting ships recently built in England will shortly start on her maiden voyage from a northeast port. This is the first electrically propelled merchant vessel ever constructed in a British yard, and is designed on what is known as the Ljungstrom turbo-electric system. In this principle, which has already been adopted on a number of small foreign merchant vessels, steam turbines drive the electric motors which actually operate the propeller. The mechanism is controlled from a switchboard similar to that in an electric power station, and the engine room is unusually compact.

"The advantages claimed for the turbo-electric system, that make it of special interest in existing circumstances, are coal economy and increased cargo space. Tests carried out in the foreign vessels referred to above show a a low fuel consumption, while it is estimated that the British ship, which is of approximately 6,400 tons, will accommodate from 8 to 10 per cent. more cargo than an ordinary steamer of the same size."

AN ENORMOUS NEW SOURCE OF OIL

The oil shortage brings into prominence a hitherto neglected source of oil in the form of "oil shale," an organic-matter bearing clay formation, which, when crushed and treated with supperheated steam, yields crude oil and sulphate of ammonia. The prospective development of the huge deposits of oil shale is one of the reasons for the oil land leasing bill now before Congress.

Shale occurs in widespread, thin beds which were formerly sea bottom. These beds are deposits of the clayey matter carried by rivers—clayey matter which, being finely broken up, does not sink readily to bottom, but after being emptied into the ocean is carried by the current and spread over wide areas. One of the characteristic traits of shale formation is that it very readily breaks into thin layers.

Shale is oil yielding, but not oil bearing. Upon treatment with superheated steam a chemical reaction takes place which yields crude oil. It must be mined like coal, and at about the same price, so that even with an extensive production of oil from shale there will be no great reduction in the price of oil.

Prof. Russell D. George, State geologist of Colorado, recently said that in two counties of Colorado there was enough shale to make "ten times as much oil as has been produced in the United States since the discovery of oil in 1859." He adds that that amount is in workable beds. Shale beds occur principally in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, and to some extent in California, Arizona and Oregon.

The oil giving properties of oil shale have long been known, but an extensive attempt to utilize them is decidedly new.

HOW THE HOUSE FLY SPENDS THE WINTER

The U. S. Bureau of Entomology has recently investigated this subject with considerable pains; and while the conclusions are to a certain extent purely negative, it is established that the fly may winter in either of two ways. There may be continual breeding throughout the winter in warm places where both food and refuse material for oviposition are available; or survival from season to season may be in the larval and pupal stages, in or under large manure heaps. There is no evidence to show that the house fly can or does persist as an adult from November to April, either outdoors, in protected stables, in attics, or in heated buildings. Temperatures of twelve and fifteen degrees Fahrenheit are quickly fatal, and there is reason to believe that anything below freezing is fatal if continued long enough. But individual longevity is not adequate to reaching over the winter in any event. If flies find access in the autumn to heated buildings where both food and media for deposition are available, such as animal houses or restaurants in which attention is not given to the disposal of kitchen and garbage wastes, they will continue breeding throughout the winter. In such cases the flies present in March and April are the descendants, not the survivors, of those which found their way to the place the preceding fall. It is suggested that this method of overwintering is far more widespread than is realized, especially in cities where the hordes of flies that appear late in May indicate the presence of several such foci. Which method of overwintering is the more common cannot be definitely stated; but it appears certain that only a small percentage of the larvae which are present in manure heaps in the autumn live through the winter and give rise to adults in the spring. Of course, in no other surroundings would such survival be possible at all, on grounds of temperature.

MIRACLES OF SURGERY

Some miracles of modern surgery are being performed in a hospital in Paris. The surgeons here have become sculptors in human flesh. They reconstruct men who otherwise would have to go through life hideously ugly, but are enabled to leave the hospital practically normal men.

A man whose face had been blown away by a shell had a new nose and lips grown for him; new chins are no longer a matter for comment.

The simplest operation is that for removing a scar. An incision is made and the arteries bound up; then a piece of skin is cut from another part of the body and the surgeon's scissors clip it to the desired shape, and very speedily the scar has disappeared.

To construct a nose a piece of gristle is removed from the region of the ribs and "put out to nurse," as a surgeon described it, under the skin of the forehead. The gristle continues to live, and when all is ready the surgeon removes it and the protective skin, and skilfully manipulates knife and scissors until a new nose is put in its place. The lower portion of the organ is sewn to the upper lip, and skin removed from the thigh is used to cover up the scar on the forehead.

A man who could not eat because he had no lower jaw was given a new one constructed from his shinbone. New lips are provided with flesh removed from the neck; broken bones in the cranium are removed and fresh bones put in their place and kept there with metal supports.

A Breton soldier who had lost his upper jaw, lips, cheeks, palate, nose, and mouth came to the hospital to ask for a new face because he wanted to go to Brittany to see his mother. He was accommodated with new cheeks and lips, and in a comparatively short time he will have the rest of his new face.

GIPSY PREDICTS KAISER WILL END LIFE

"The war will be over this year, the Germans will be beaten, and the kaiser will die by his own hand."

That was the declaration made to me by an old gipsy woman, "Selina Smith," known all over the United Kingdom as a fortune-teller, and who told the kaiser's fortune many years ago.

Twenty-seven years or so ago Selina was down in the vicinity of Windsor Forest, where at the time one of the Vanderfeldes stayed, and to prove the authenticity of her statement the old gipsy woman produced a personal letter signed by the gentleman in question.

"There was a hunt meeting," said Selina, "and there was a big assembly of aristocracy. I was hailed by one of my old patrons.

"'Selina,' he said, 'here's another client for you.' I looked into the face of a man who appeared to be about thirty. One arm was shorter than the other. I forget which one it was. But when he heard me called Selina, the gipsy fortune-teller, he tried to hide his short arm. But for all that I must say that he seemed to have a very pleasant face. At first he was not inclined to enter into the fun of having his fortune told. As a matter of fact, he declined at first, but after being chaffed a great deal he allowed me to read his hand.

"I cannot remember all that I told this man, whom you will recognize as the kaiser, although at the time I did not know it was the kaiser. But I know that I told him one or two homely truths, which he apparently did not like.

"First of all I told him a few of the things that had already occurred in his career, and then I went on to the future.

"'You like England,' I said, 'but you do not like the people in it. You can only mount a horse on one side.' He did not seem to like this remark, as I inferred from the nasty look that came into his face. But there was worse to follow. From this man's hand I could see that he had a great lust for power. I could also see that he would never get what he was after and that fate would deal unkindly with him in the end.

"I did not tell him this in so many words. As near as I can remember, I said: 'You have one great ambition in life, but that ambition you will never attain.'

"He snatched away his hand and called me a fool. 'It's nothing but a lot of rubbish,' he declared, and walked away.

"Neither he nor any of the huns will ever land on the shores except as prisoners.

"This war is going to be over this year."

Leaning forward Selina said, her voice dropping almost to a whisper:

"The man whose hand I read twenty-seven years ago may live to see this war over, but I doubt it. He may live to see it just over. I hope he does. Then, perhaps, he will remember what the gipsy fortune-teller told him, in Windsor Forest. To live and see the war just over will be the best punishment that this world can give him, but I am afraid he will see the end of the war before many others, and he will take his own life. That he will not die a natural death is certain.

"Already," the gipsy went on, "he knows he is not the real governor of his own land. He is in the hands of others, and those others will in the end help him on to inevitable disaster."

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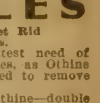

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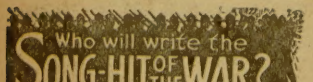

With this country entering its second year in the "World War" it is doubtful if the song which will be known as the "Hit of the War" has as yet made its appearance. While it is true that such War Songs as "Over There" and "Liberty Bell" have made some impression, have they got adopted by another "It's A Long Way To Tipperary," which has been the great favorite with the "English Tommies"? Inasmuch as several Commanders of our training cantonments have requested boys in the service to write such a song, it appears to be still wanting.

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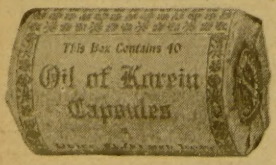

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